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BRAHMS

Op. 2

Sonata in F sharp

FOR THE PIANOFORTE

(WHITING)

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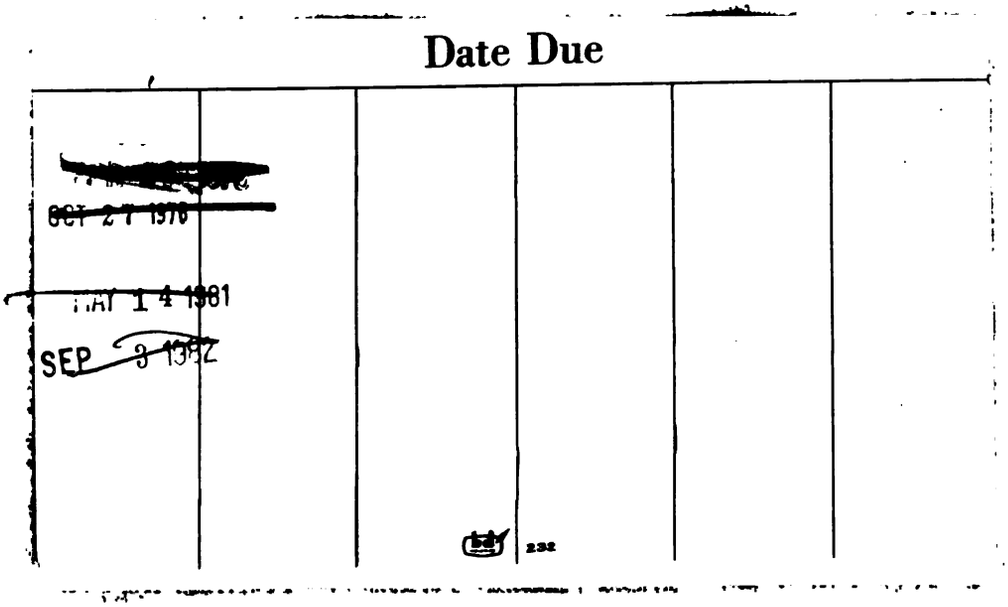

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Vol. 1361

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Op. 2

Sonata in Fsharp

FOR THE PIANOFORTE

Edited by
ARTHUR WHITING

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PREFACE

The chief office of an editor of Brahms' pianoforte music is to declare that the original notation, as set down by the hand of the composer, is so significant, so comprehensible, so complete, that any editorial interpretation or amplification is unnecessary and redundant; for to impress upon the minds of students the idea of the potency of Brahms' indications, direct and implied, is a service more valuable than many footnotes. To beg annotators to spare his pages is the duty of all who know how perfect those pages are.

The science of music-notation is, at best, inflexible and approximate, lacking fine degrees. Although Brahms must have felt its limitations, it is doubtful that his meaning could have been made any clearer by this universally-used code. When composers are temperamentally inexact, like Schumann, their uncertainty is so increased by rigid notation that many ambiguous passages occur which may well be explained by the reviewer. But Brahms' disciplined mind and definite purpose leave the editor unemployed, for, by him, the science of music-notation was used with complete efficiency for the first time.

A writer of music must decide, before putting a note to paper, what degree of understanding in his interpreter he will appeal to. It is obvious that an artist of supreme intelligence requires from the composer nothing but bare notation and phrasing; that he finds tempo, expression and dynamics inherent in the music itself; that he resents any hint, like the word *cantabile*, for example, as a reflection on his sensibility. But a method of bare notation is for the very few.

On the other hand, composers who address themselves to the lowest degree of musical comprehension cover their pages with warnings and emotional directions. They shout FFFFF and PPPPP at their players as at stupid and reluctant animals, knowing well that groups of three of these letters represent, conventionally, the maximum and minimum of sound, and that the additional letters only serve to advertise their own extravagance and futility.

The first of these methods is impracticable because it aims too high; the second fails to commend itself because, by aiming too low, it demoralizes the relation of the composer to the performer. Brahms employs a modification of the first; he indicates with such tact and moderation, that not only sign but no-sign is significant. He respects his interpreter and is in turn respected. He is a commander whose voice is never raised.

The student of Brahms soon learns to obey this "command by implication" and to feel that he is moving in high company. When this confidence between composer and performer is complete the notation may be very simple and extra signs used only in case of alternative readings. Brahms' economy in the use of extremes of effect is characteristic and marks the thrifty mind of the artist. In the "Liebeslieder," op. 52, and

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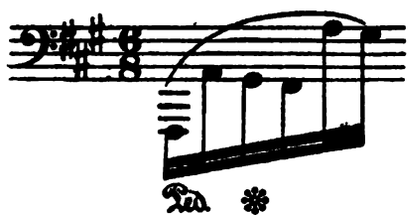
"Neue Liebeslieder," op. 65, songs of intensity and passion, the greatest demands for loud and soft are FF and PP (the first sign being employed but once in the combined volumes), thus leaving one degree unused in each case; a power-in-reserve which appeals more to the imagination of artists than any hysterical *tutta forza*.

Such fine adjustment, then, convinces the reviewer that his only duty is to make the student conscious of this admirable method; that the most helpful editor of Brahms' music is he who edits least. But in declining to exercise the usual functions of an annotator I believe that there still remain three ways in which service may be rendered to young performers of this composer's pianoforte works: i. e., by amplifying the fingering of the original editions, by adding a system of complete damper-pedalling, and by suggesting tempo.

Brahms here and there indicated fingering for passages which, in their construction, are characteristic of his pianoforte technique. This suffices for mature artists, but younger players may be assisted by a fuller demonstration of his method. At the same time, I believe that the fingering of a passage can be more lastingly impressed on the mind by indicating one significant finger than by marking all those which reasonably follow it; thus my purpose is to number only where there is a less effective alternative.

Brahms followed the unfortunate tradition which leaves the use of the damper-pedal to the discretion of the player; unfortunate, because the taste of the performer may be at wide variance with that of the composer. This option cannot fail to misrepresent, at times, the Brahms style, which peculiarly demands breadth and sonority. It is true that he indicates pedal-use occasionally, but rarely in questionable places or in a way to enhance the artistic effect. For example, at the beginning of the Capriccio, op. 76, No. 1, we find:



Surely neither the composer nor any artist would be satisfied with such meagre tone-color in agitated and atmospheric music. The pedagogue who is guided by his eyes more than by his ears warns pupils against including passing-tones in the harmonic effect (Brahms showed a momentary and unwonted consideration for Pianoforte Beckmessers in the above marking); the result is "pupil-pedalling," which is dry and unpianistic. Students who aim to become artists must learn to adopt the methods of artists.

Again, at the climax of the Fugue in "Variationen und Fuge über ein Thema von Händel," op. 24, Brahms indicates *col pedale*, a sign which serves only to disturb the conscientious pianist, who is uncertain how much before should have been without and how much to follow should be with pedal; the sign itself does no more than to confirm the obvious.

The customary marking, *Ped.* ✱, is entirely inadequate for exactness; for which reason I have discarded it in favor of a notation which directs the up and down motions of the pedal-lever as definitely as it does those of the keys.

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It will be observed that the principle adopted in making pedal-durations in this edition is that followed by all modern pianoforte artists, i. e., *the use of the damper-pedal is regulated more by harmony than by melody*. This method involves a careful adaptation of the touch to passing-tones in delicate passages. The pianist who is unable or unwilling to modify foreign tones so that they do not clash unpleasantly with the prevailing harmony will find this system discordant and unsatisfactory; for an inflexible touch demands either a sparing use of the pedal or such a continual shifting that the harmony is often fragmentary.

Pianoforte notation, in its practical working, differs entirely from that of other instruments. The duration of a tone for an orchestral instrument is prescribed exactly by the composer, but a literal following of time-values in a pianoforte score precludes, almost entirely, the use of the damper-pedal. The sixteenth-notes of this arpeggio figure, for example,

are prolonged beyond their indicated time by the pedal, proving that the actual sound of the instrument is usually independent of note- and rest-values. An attempt to write out the desired extension would result in a notation so complicated as to be almost illegible and quite impracticable.

The half-raising of the pedal-lever so that upper tones are entirely dampened while fundamental tones continue to sound is an indispensable feature of modern pedalling. Also the effects of *crescendo*, by gradually pressing down the pedal-lever, and of *diminuendo*, by slowly releasing it, are familiar to all artists. The end of a phrase is generally more satisfactory when, with it, the pedal-lever is gradually raised than when, by a quick up-movement, the sound ceases abruptly.

Una Corda is the term which has been used from the beginning of pianoforte history to indicate the use of the left pedal to produce a veiled tone. The term connotes that only one of the two strings of the early grand pianoforte was allowed to sound when this pedal shifted the key-action. But now, the number of wires to most of the keys is increased to three; two of them sound when this pedal is in use, and the term is properly *due corde*, with *tre corde* as a sign of release. I have rarely called for this pedal in the present edition, as its effectiveness varies so considerably with different instruments that its employment is best left to the judgment of the player.

Due Corde should be used for tone-color and not exclusively as a means of reducing the quantity of sound, which is the function of the fingers. Nor should it be confined entirely to delicate passages, for many artists employ it to give a certain sombre quality in loud effects, which is very impressive.

In adding this system of damper-pedalling to Brahms' works I do not claim to be authoritative, but submit it simply as my own interpretation of his music from this acoustical standpoint, hoping that it may be a help to students, and a hint to young composers that their complete markings for the use and non-use of the sympathetic overtones by means of the pedal is a part of their creative work.

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The Metronome signs indicate merely the average pulse, and should be used for reference only. A rigid movement in Brahms' music is as inartistic and ineffective as is the other extreme, a fundamental irregularity.

In the many passages where the composer produces the effect of retardation by gradually changing from short notes to longer notes, as in the close of the Rhapsodie, op. 79, No. 2, the prevailing rhythm should be maintained exactly.

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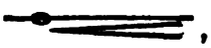
PEDAL NOTATION

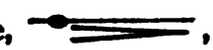
(A) Notes and rests indicate the use and non-use of the damper-pedal.

(B) A note indicates that the down-movement of the pedal-lever is to begin exactly with the note. When a note is followed by a rest the up-movement of the pedal-lever is to begin exactly with the rest.

(C) A note with a diagonal line, , indicates that there is to be sufficient delay in the down-movement to insure clearness. When such a note is preceded by another note, as in continuous (legato) pedalling, the preparatory up-movement of the pedal-lever is to coincide exactly with the down-movement of the keys.

(D) A dot under a pedal-note preceded by a tie, , indicates a half up-movement of the pedal-lever followed instantly by a down-movement whereby fundamental tones are retained in part, while upper tones are dampened.

(E) The sign of *crescendo* following a pedal-note,  , indicates that the pedal-lever is to be pressed down gradually through the duration of the note.

(F) The sign of *diminuendo* following a pedal-note,  , indicates that the pedal-lever, already down, is to be raised gradually through the duration of the note.

(G) A dot, only, under a pedal-note, indicates that the pedal-lever is to be raised before the full time-value of the note has expired.

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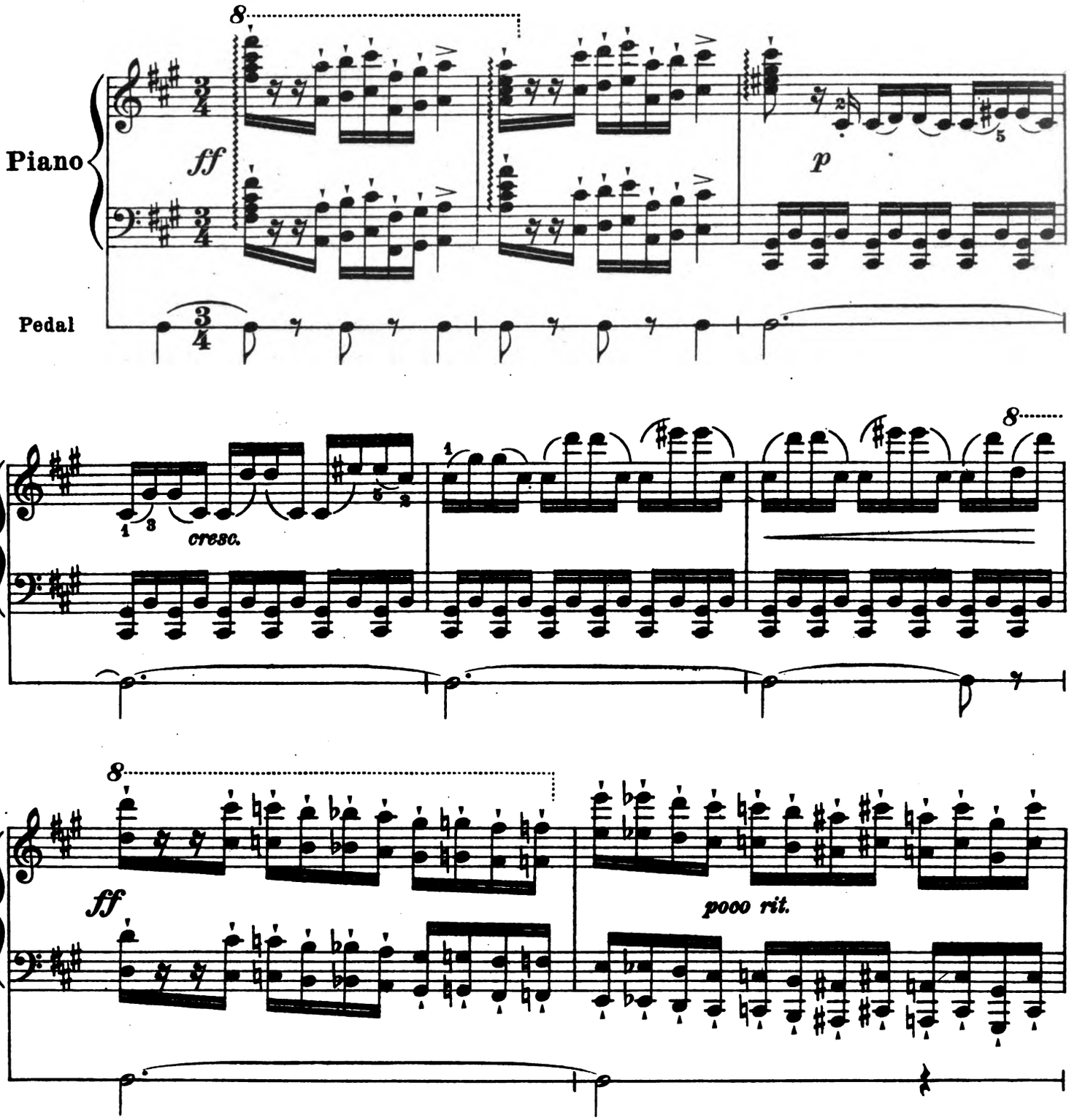
Sonata

Johannes Brahms. Op. 2

Allegro non troppo ma energico (♩ = 104)



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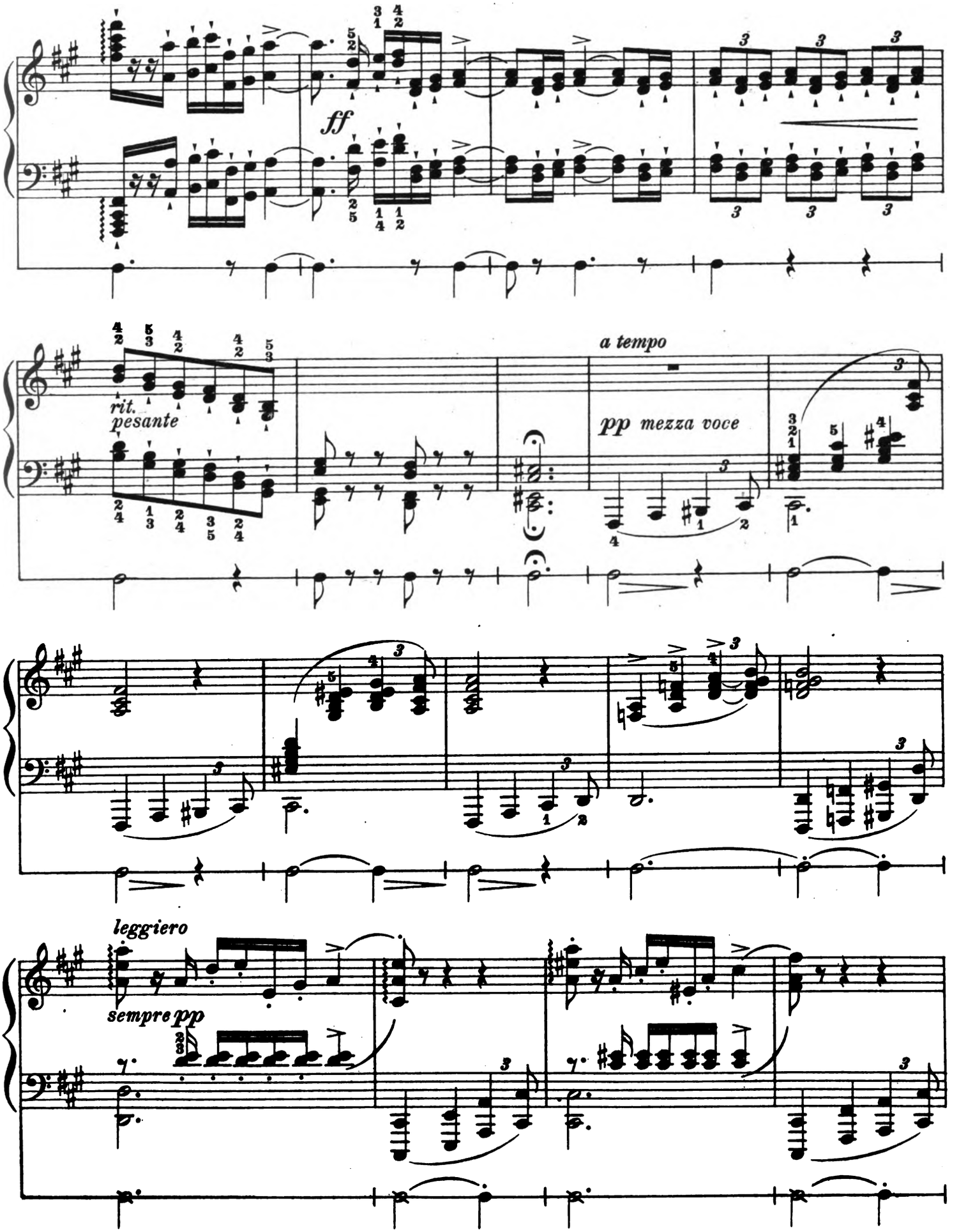

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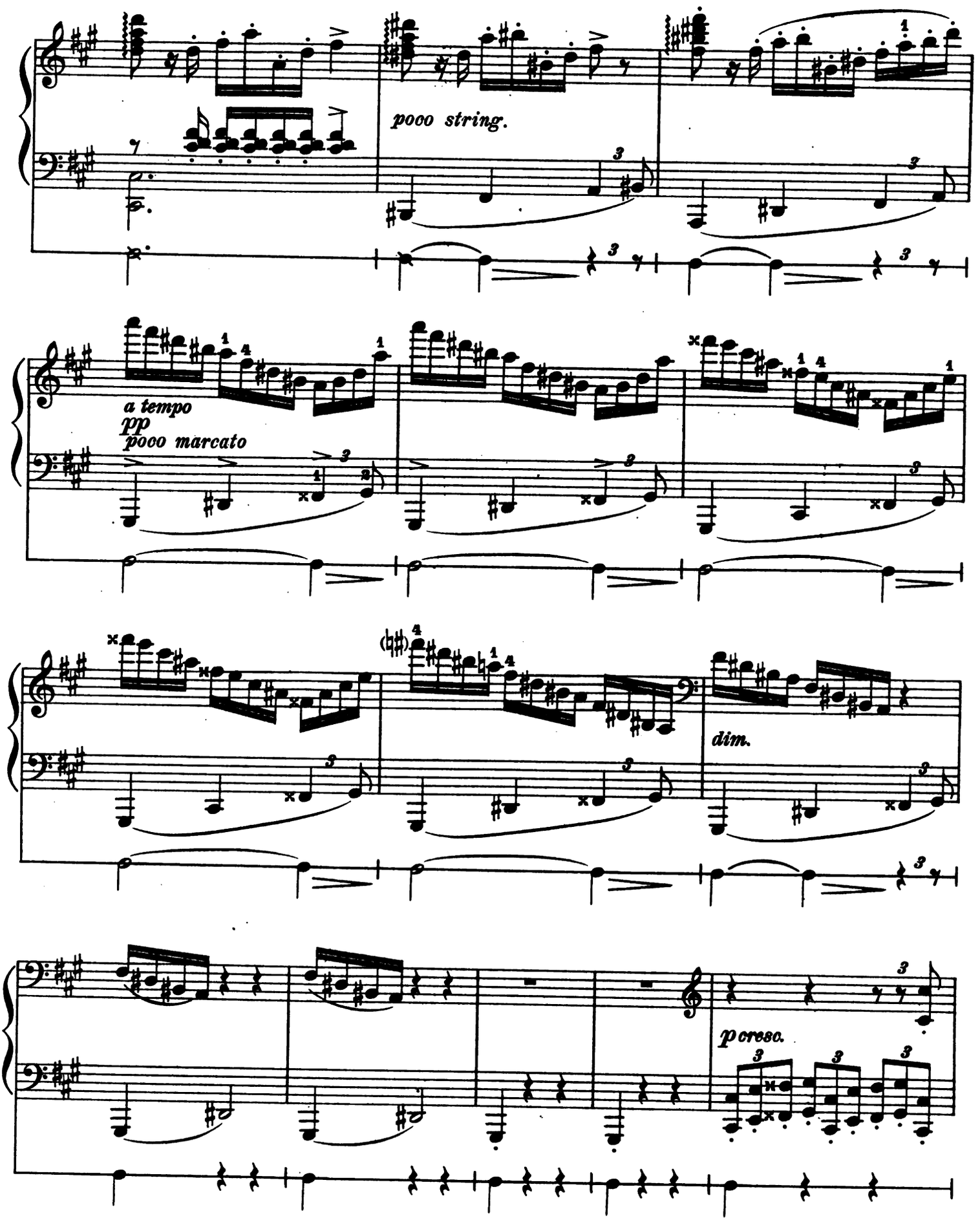

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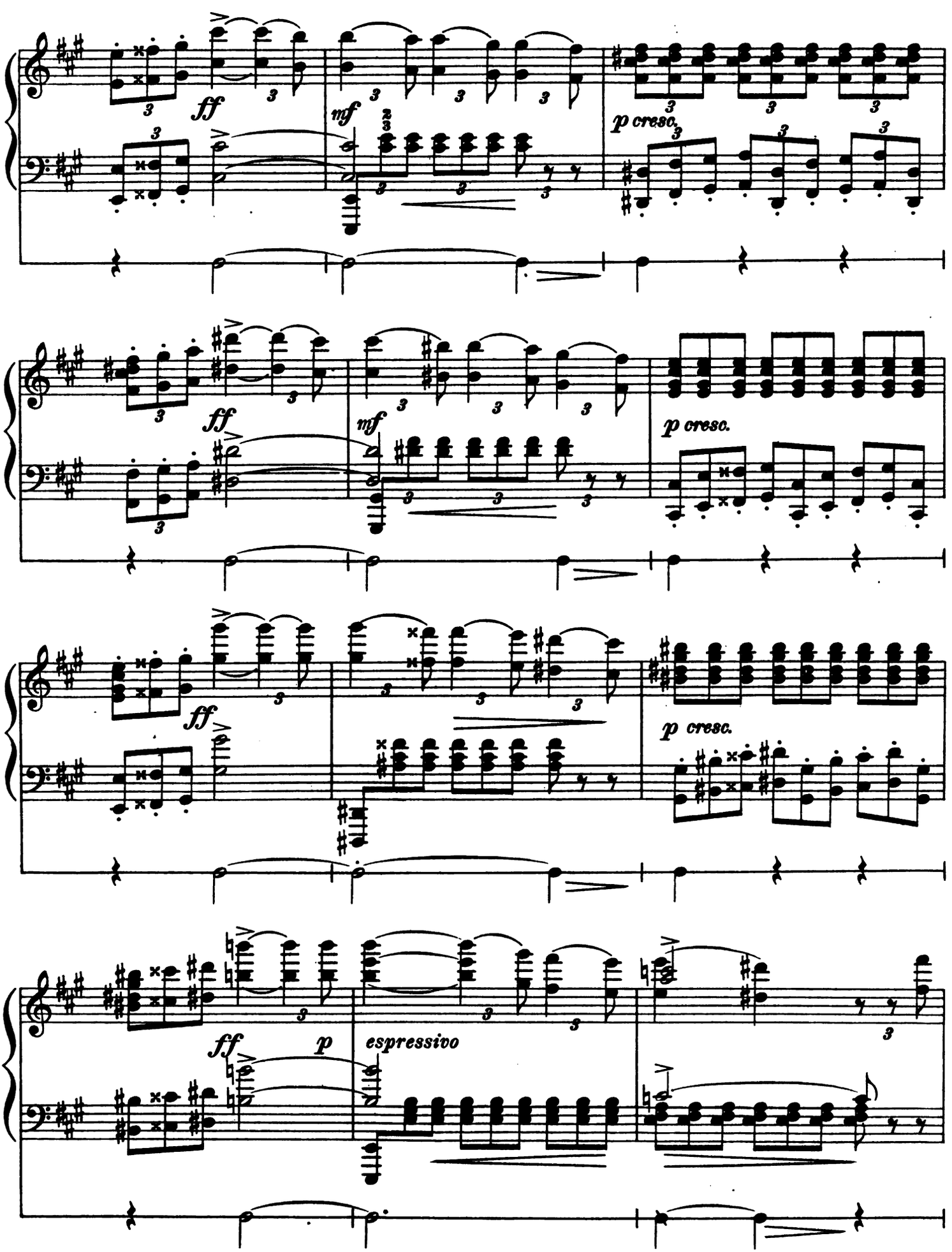

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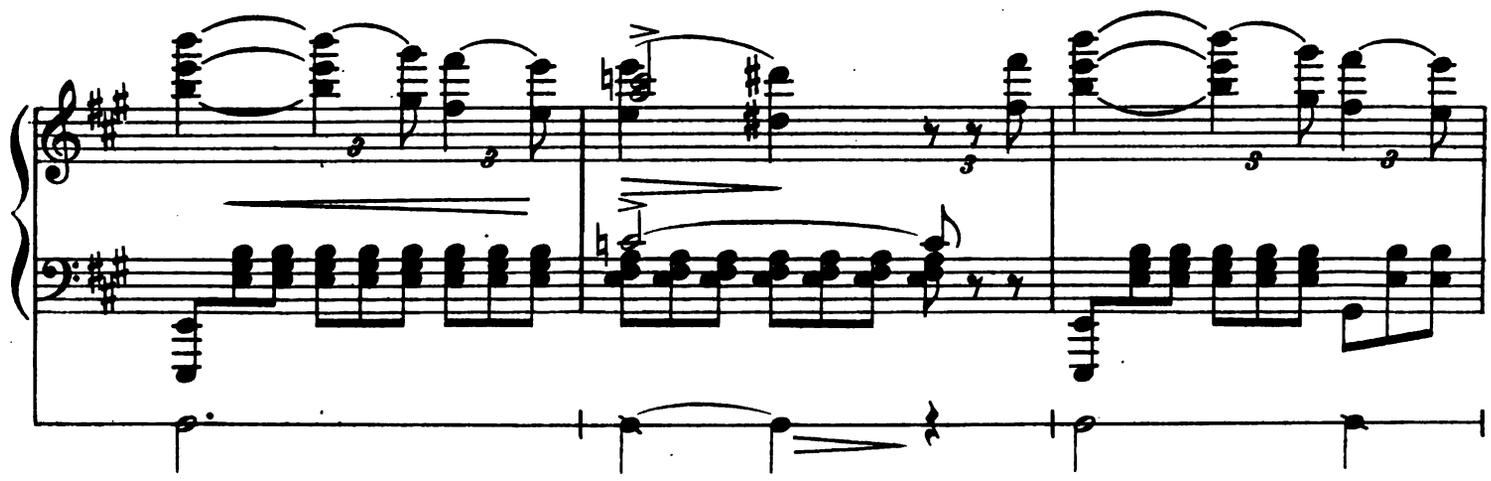

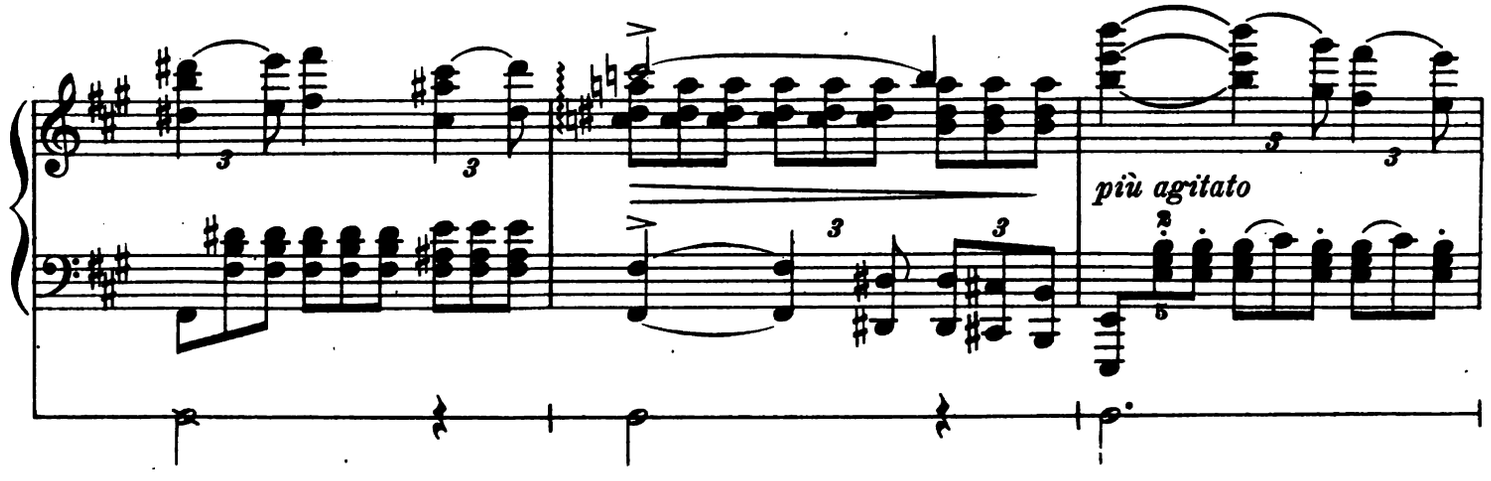

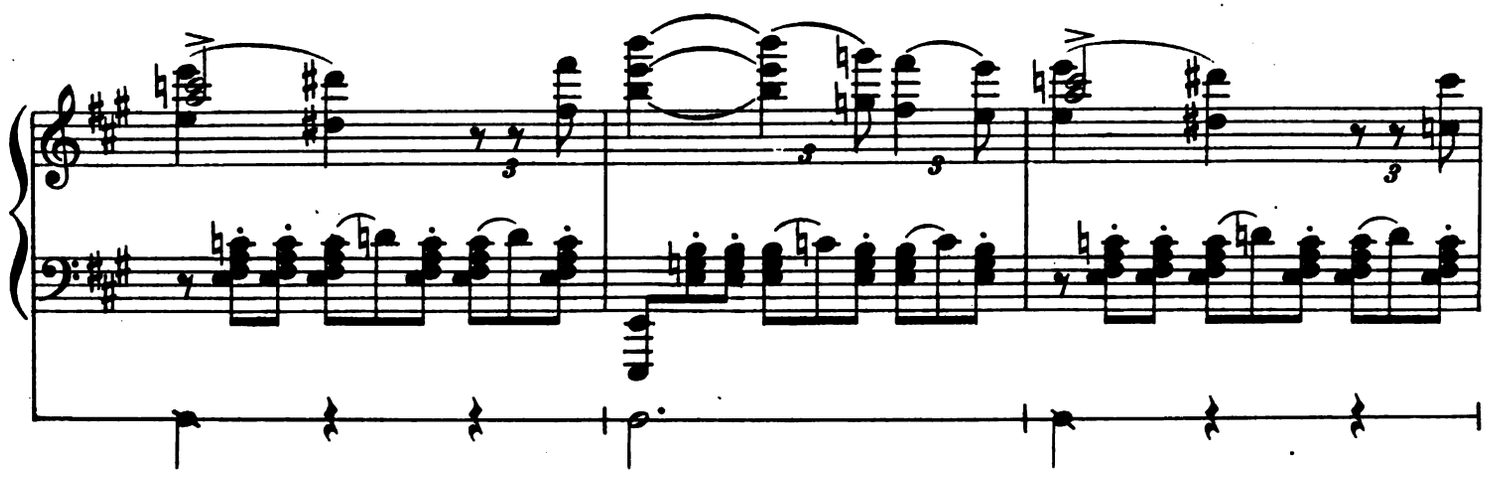

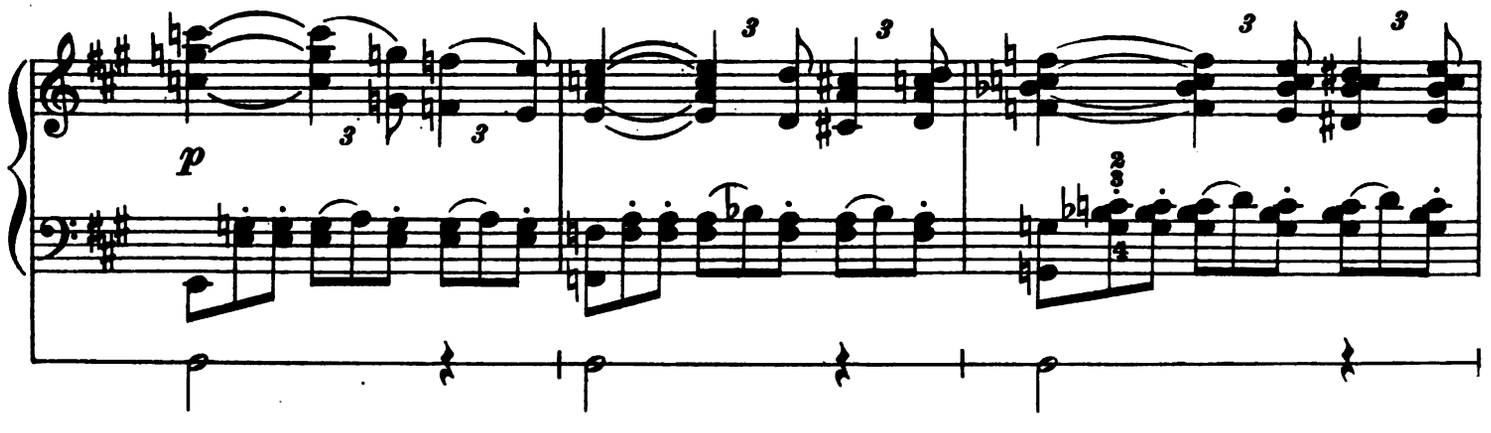

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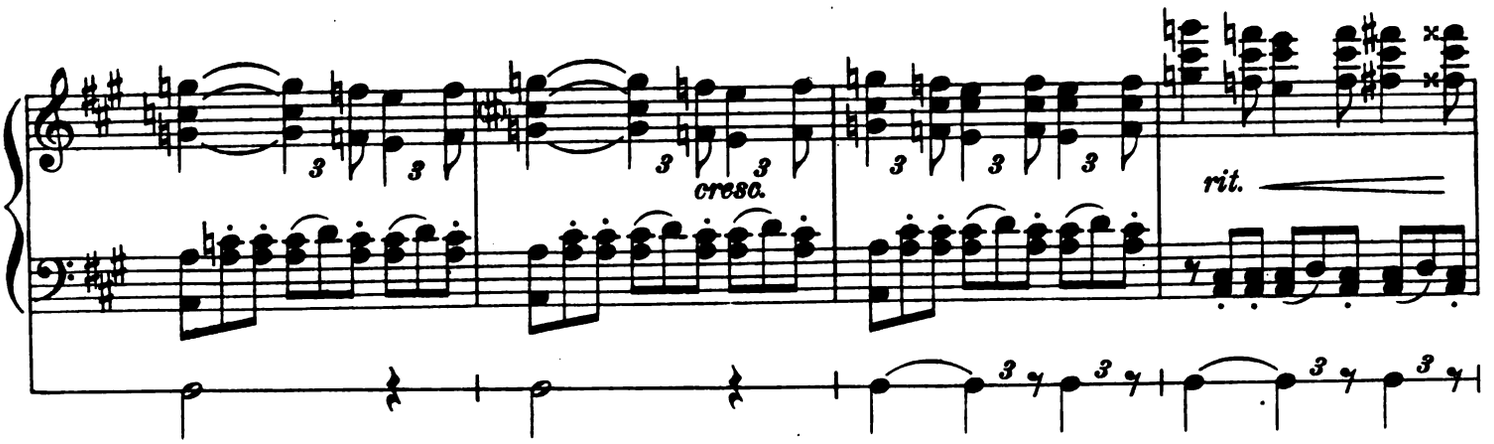

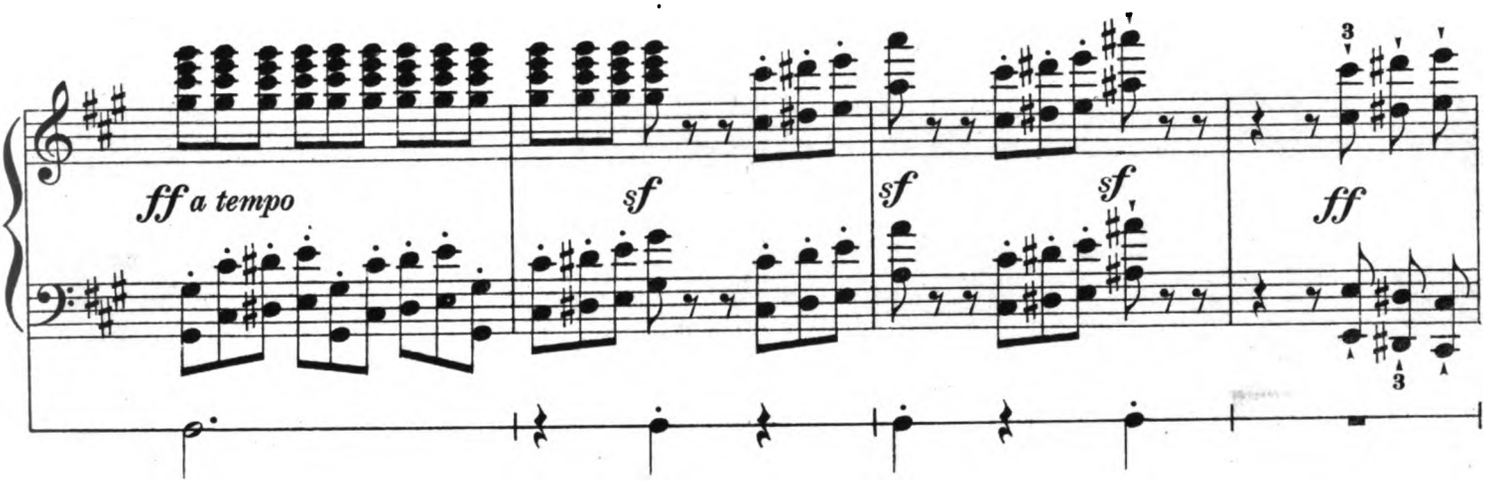

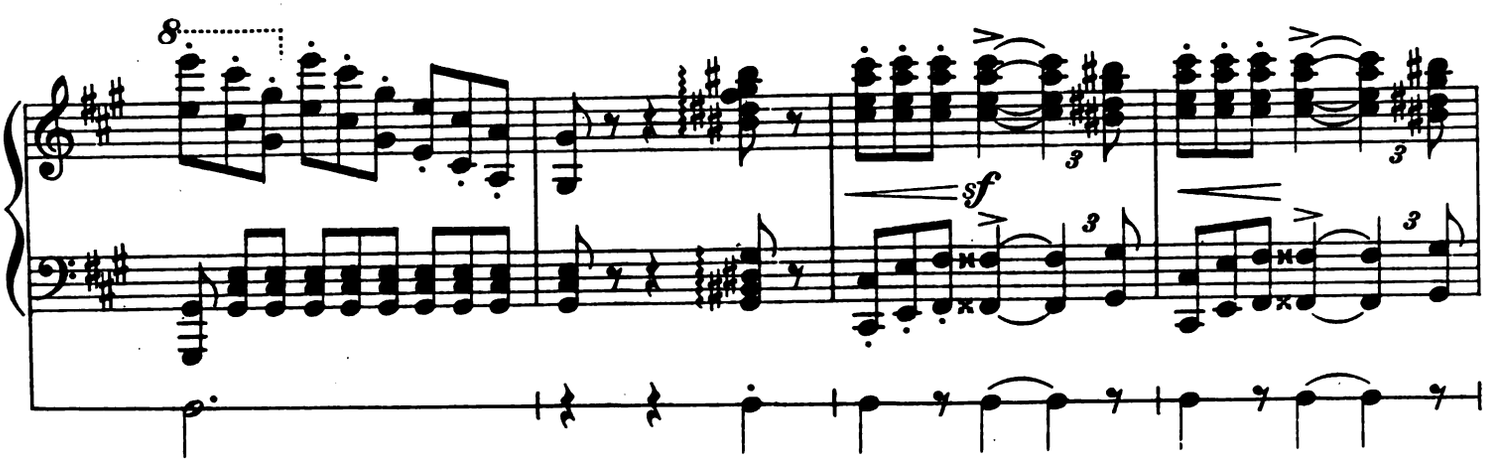

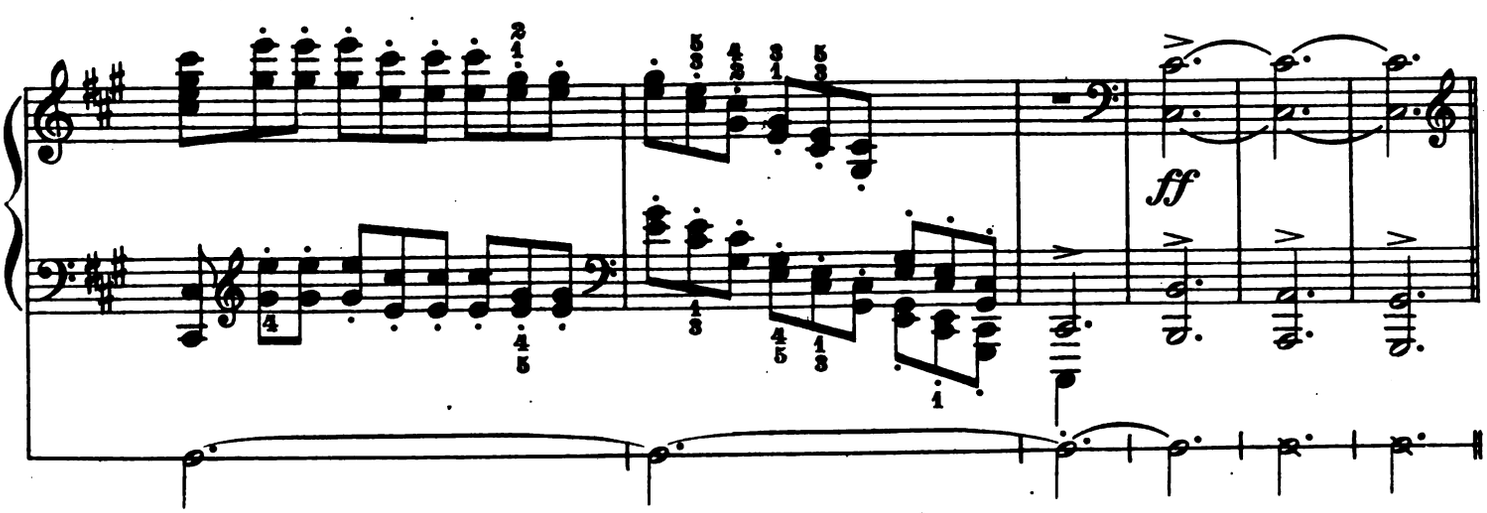

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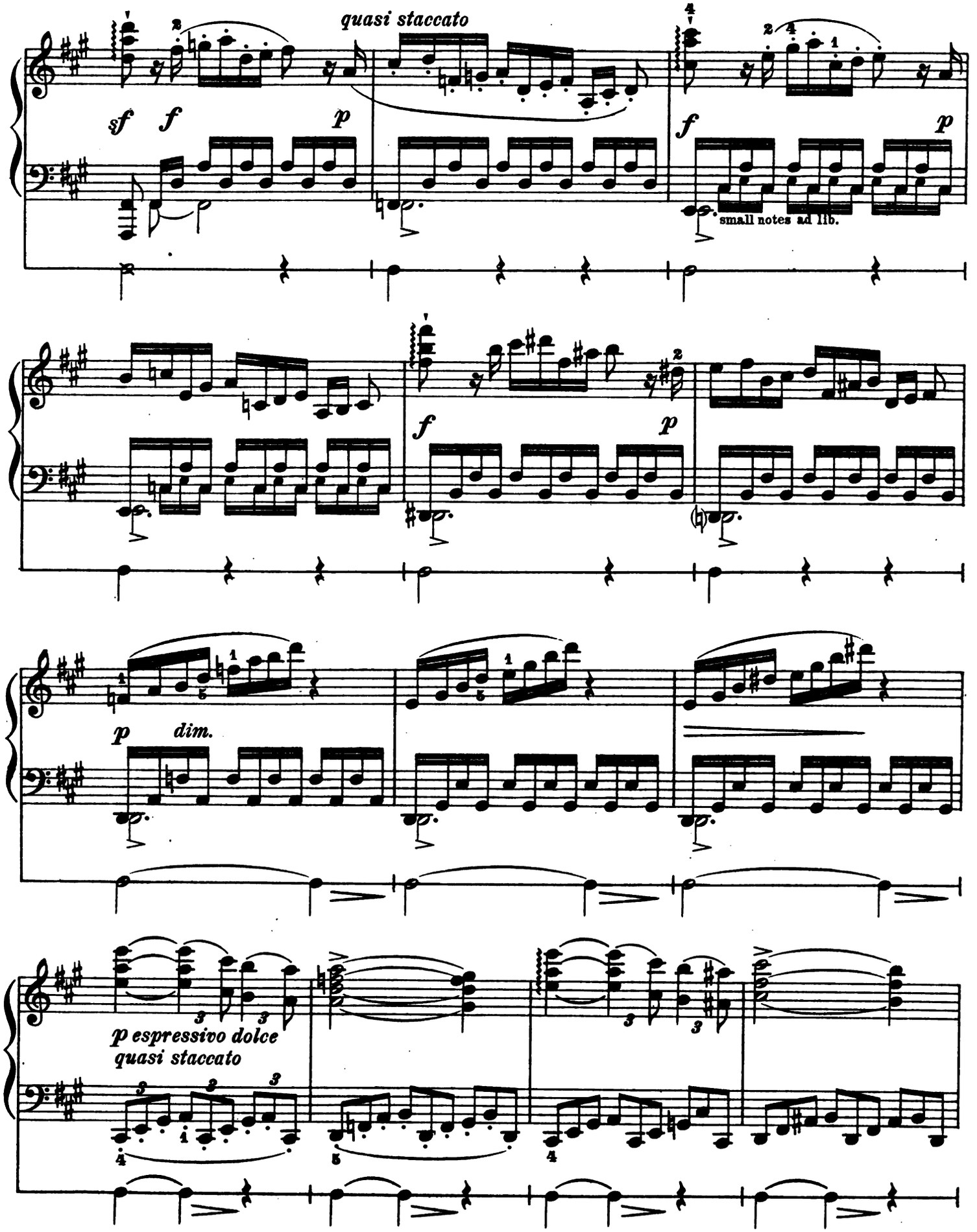

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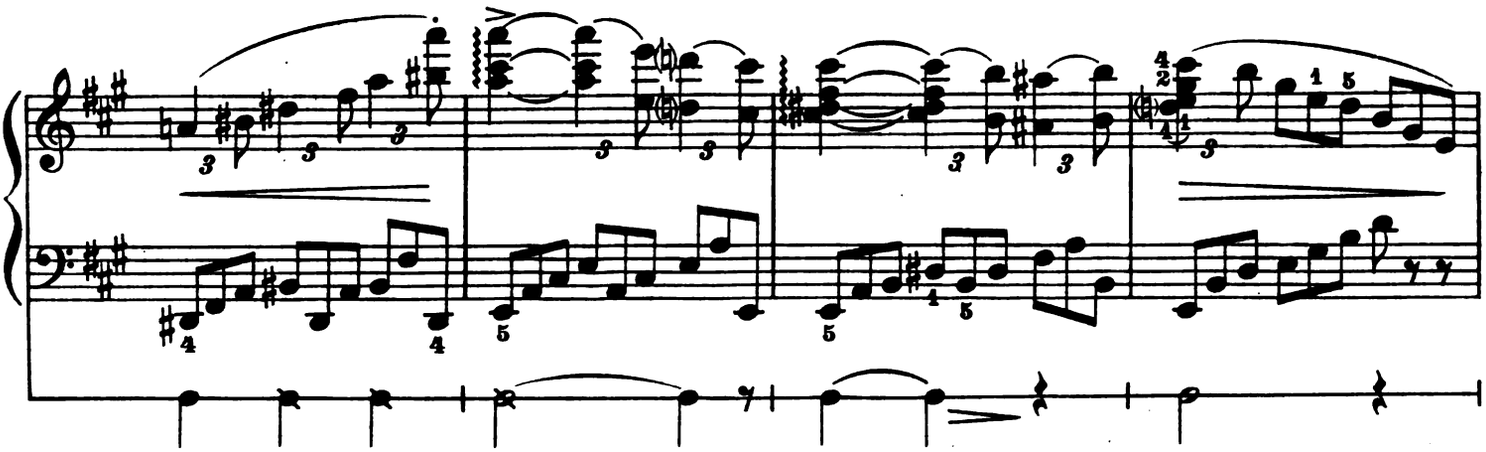

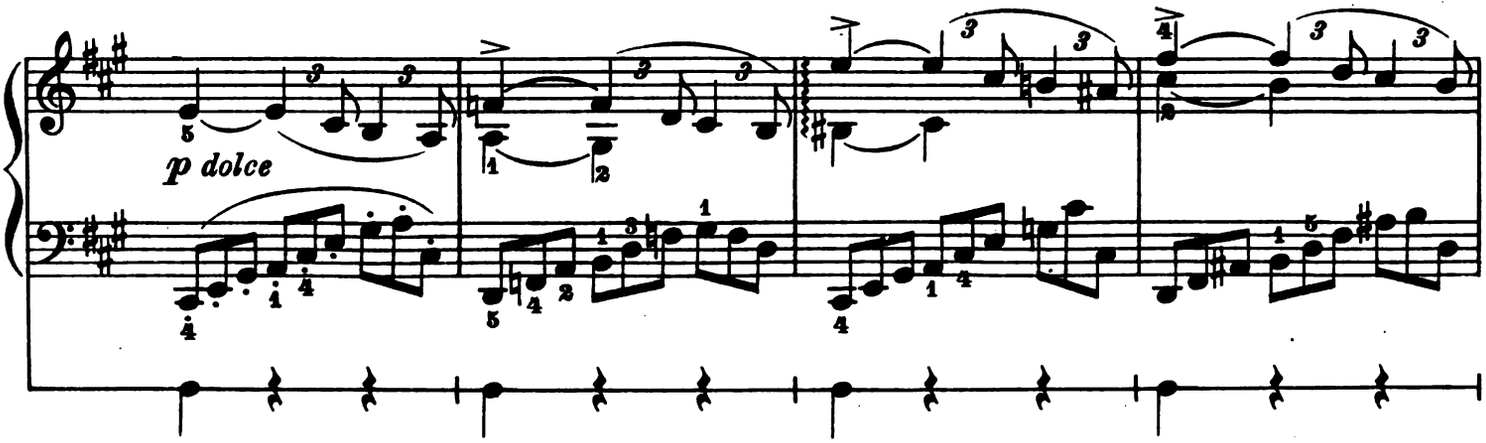

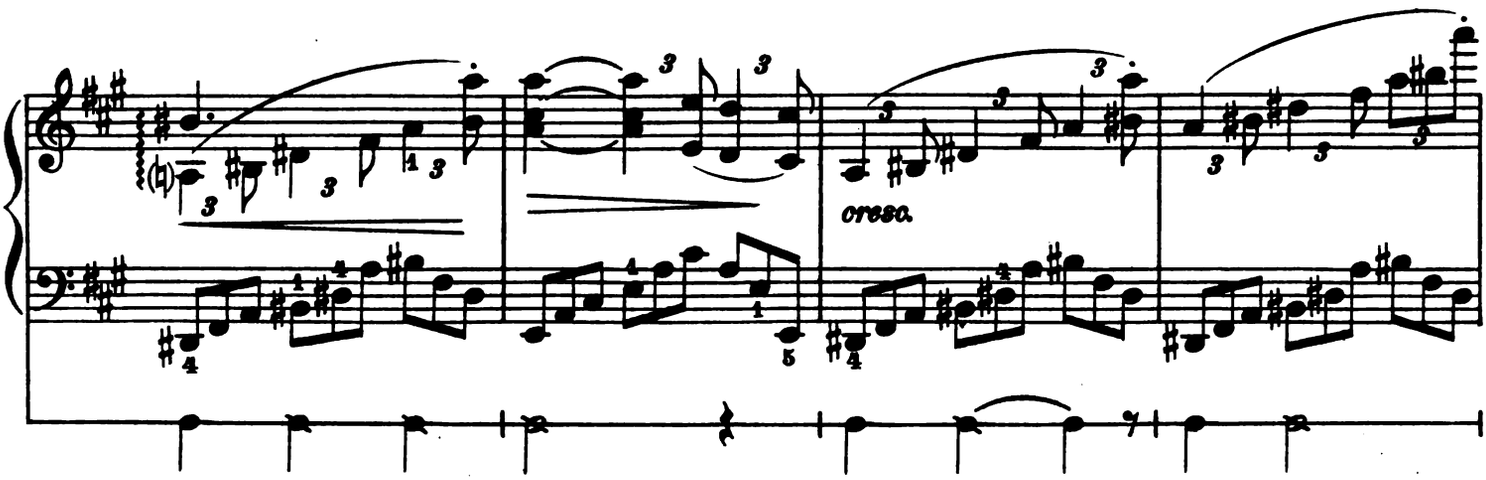

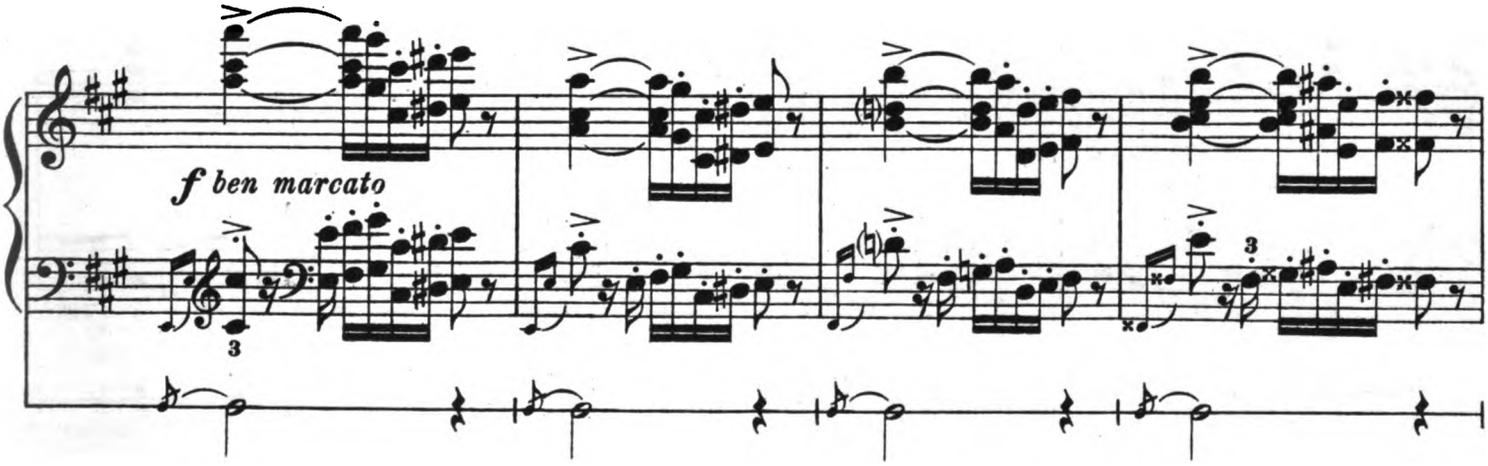

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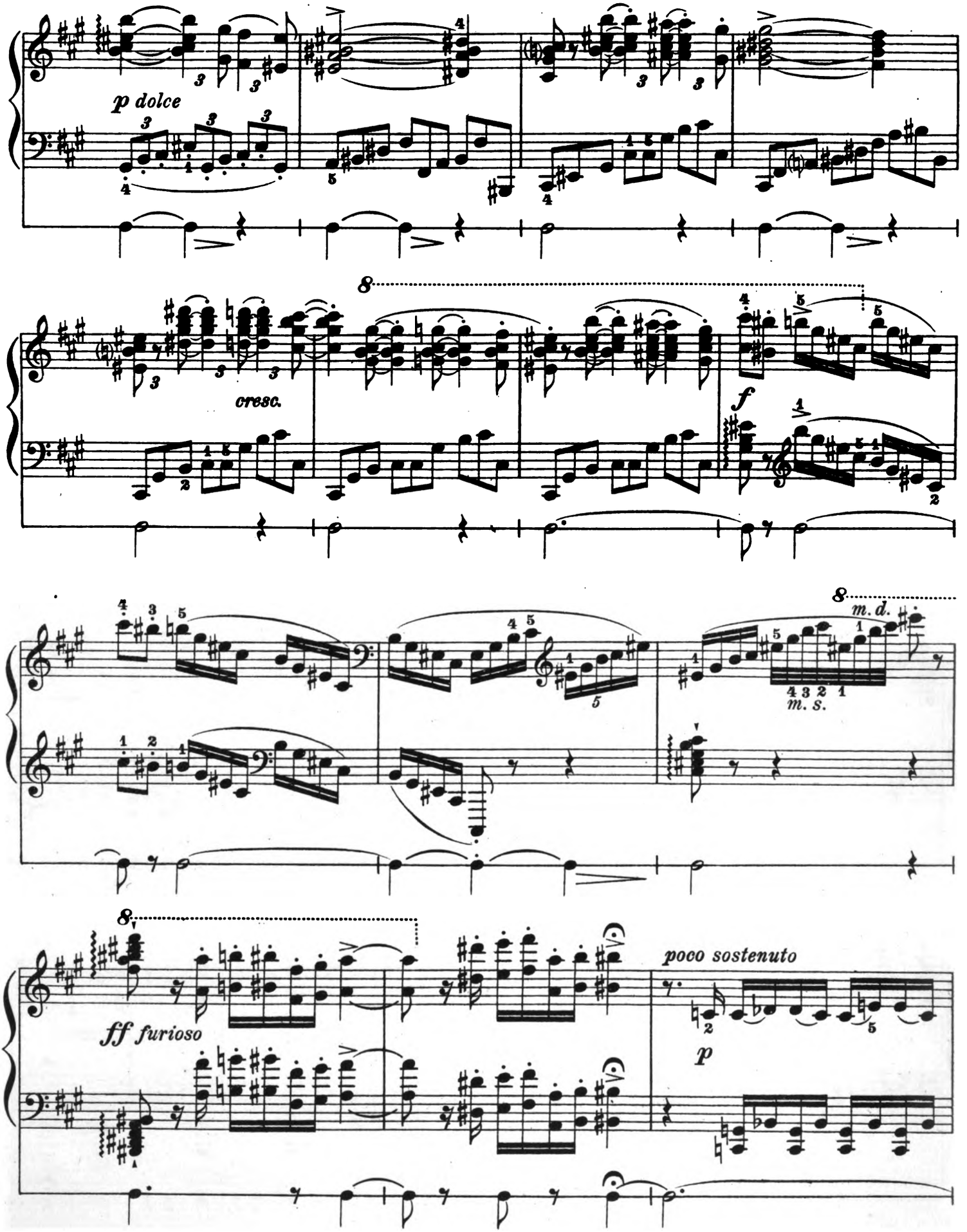

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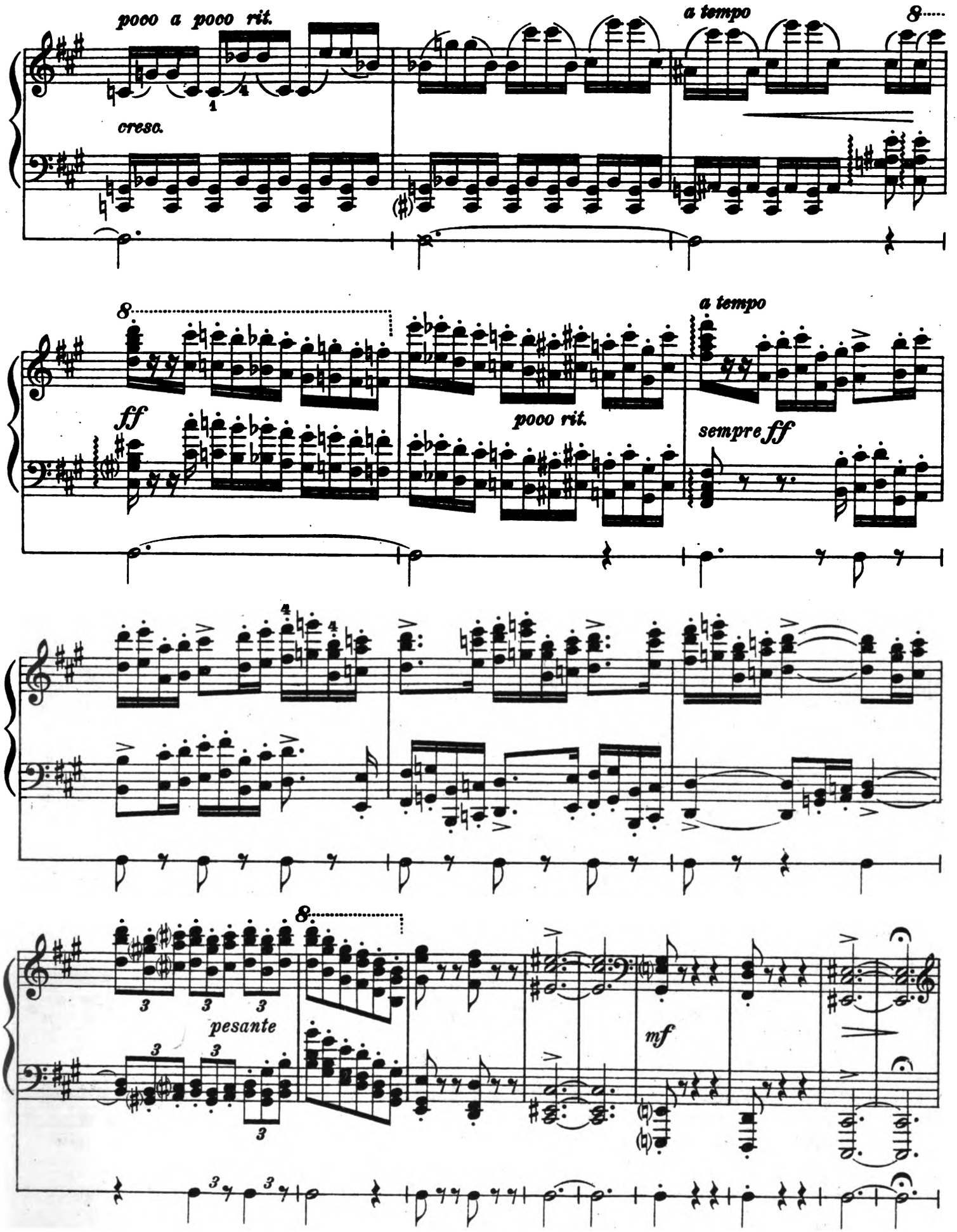

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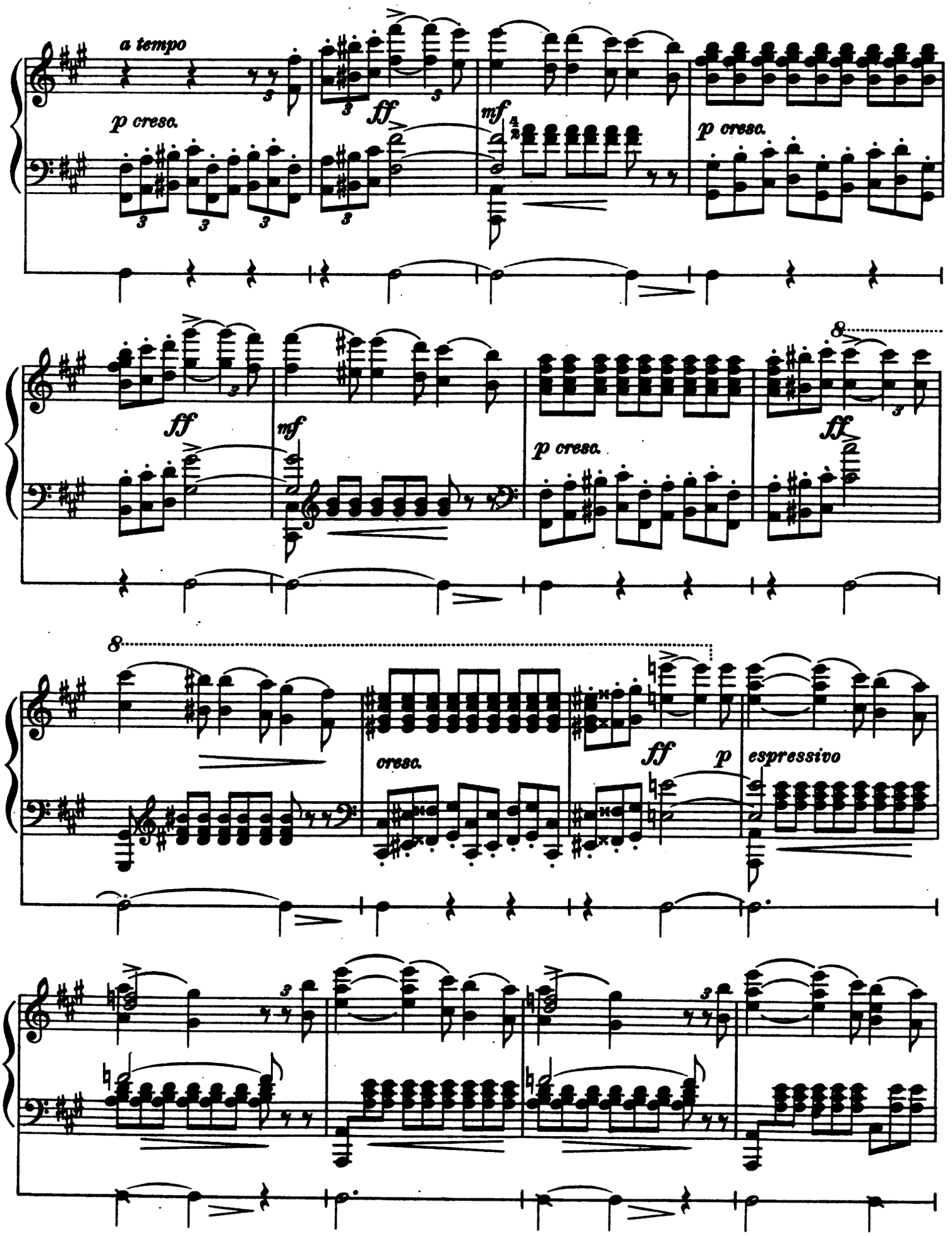

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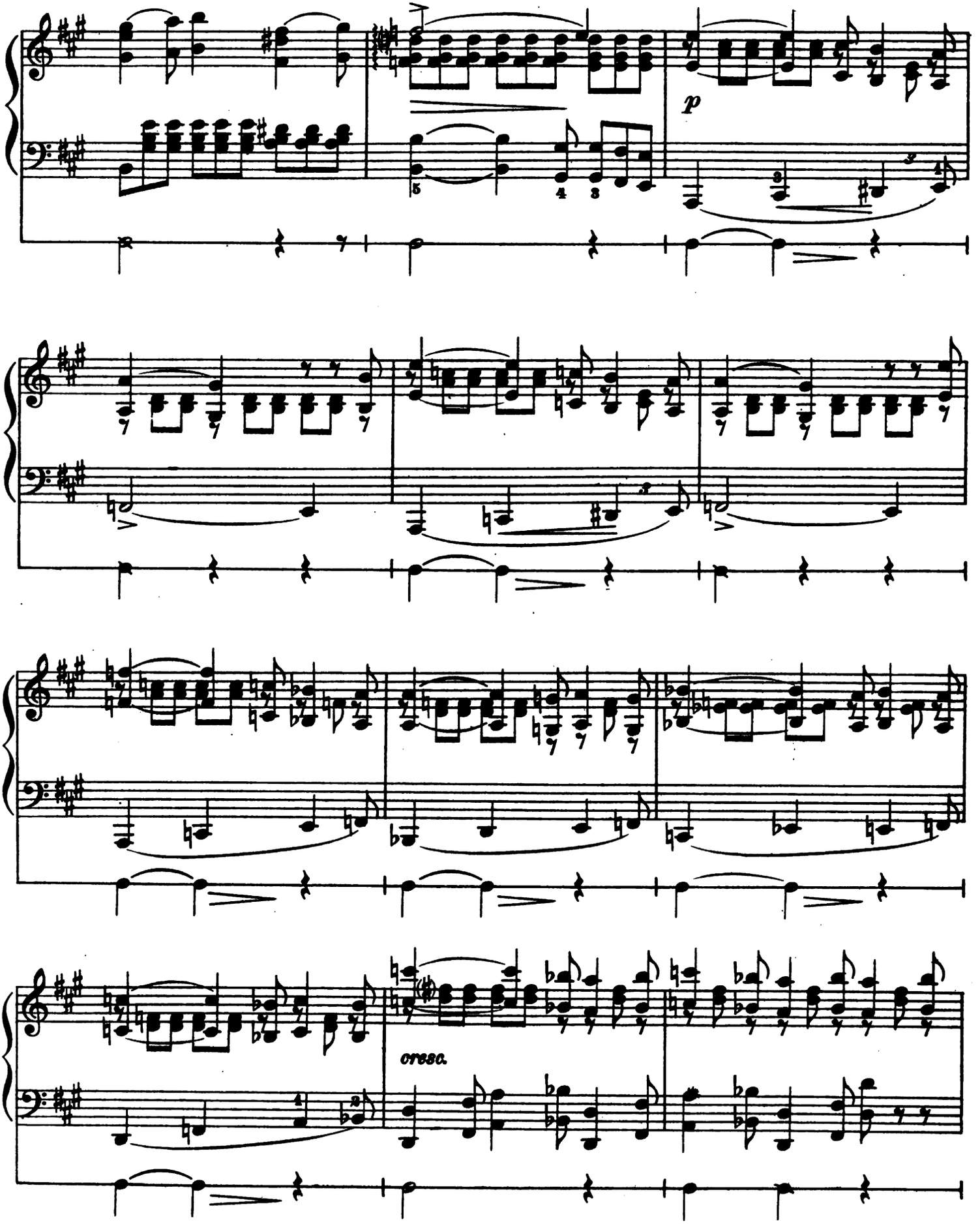

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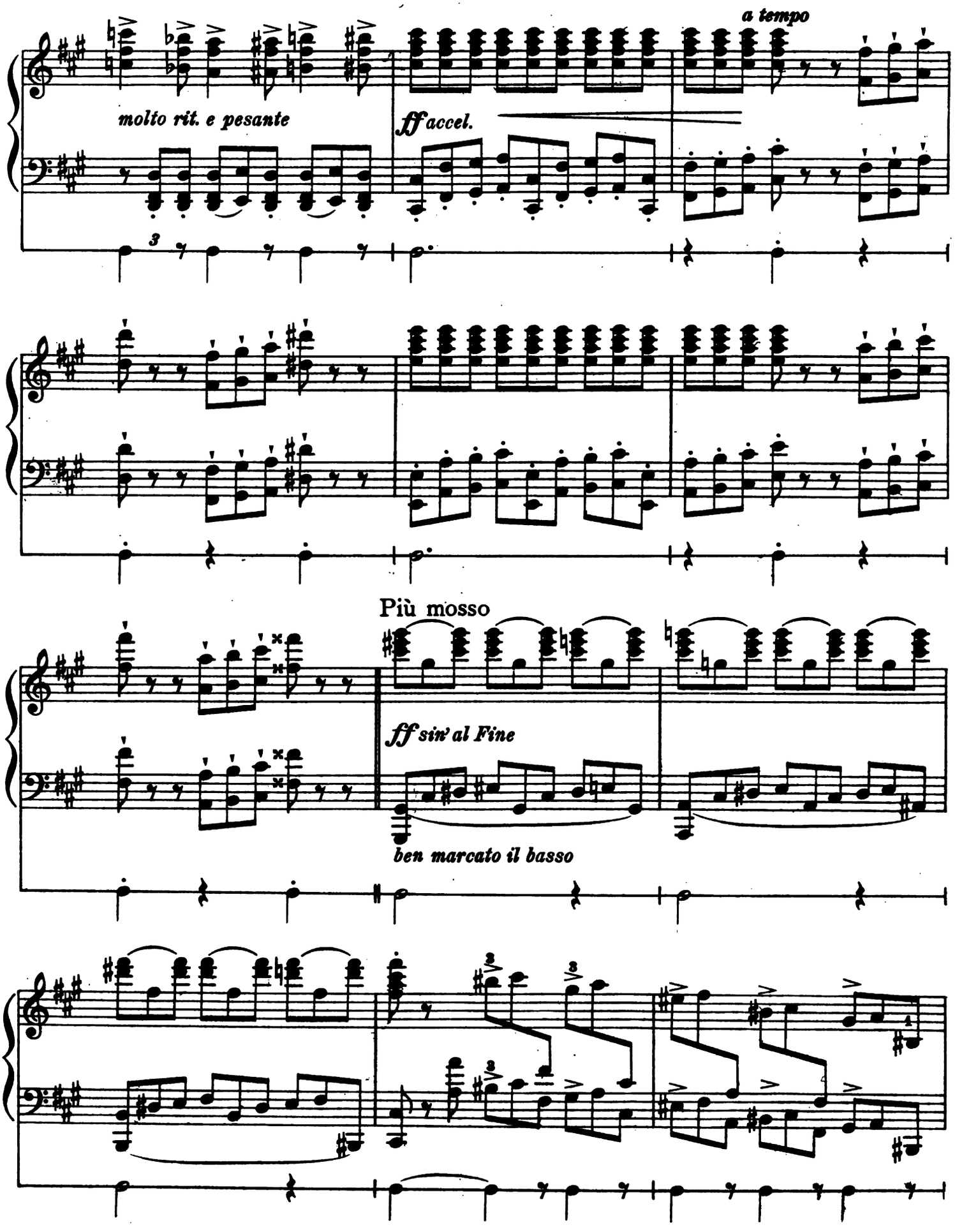

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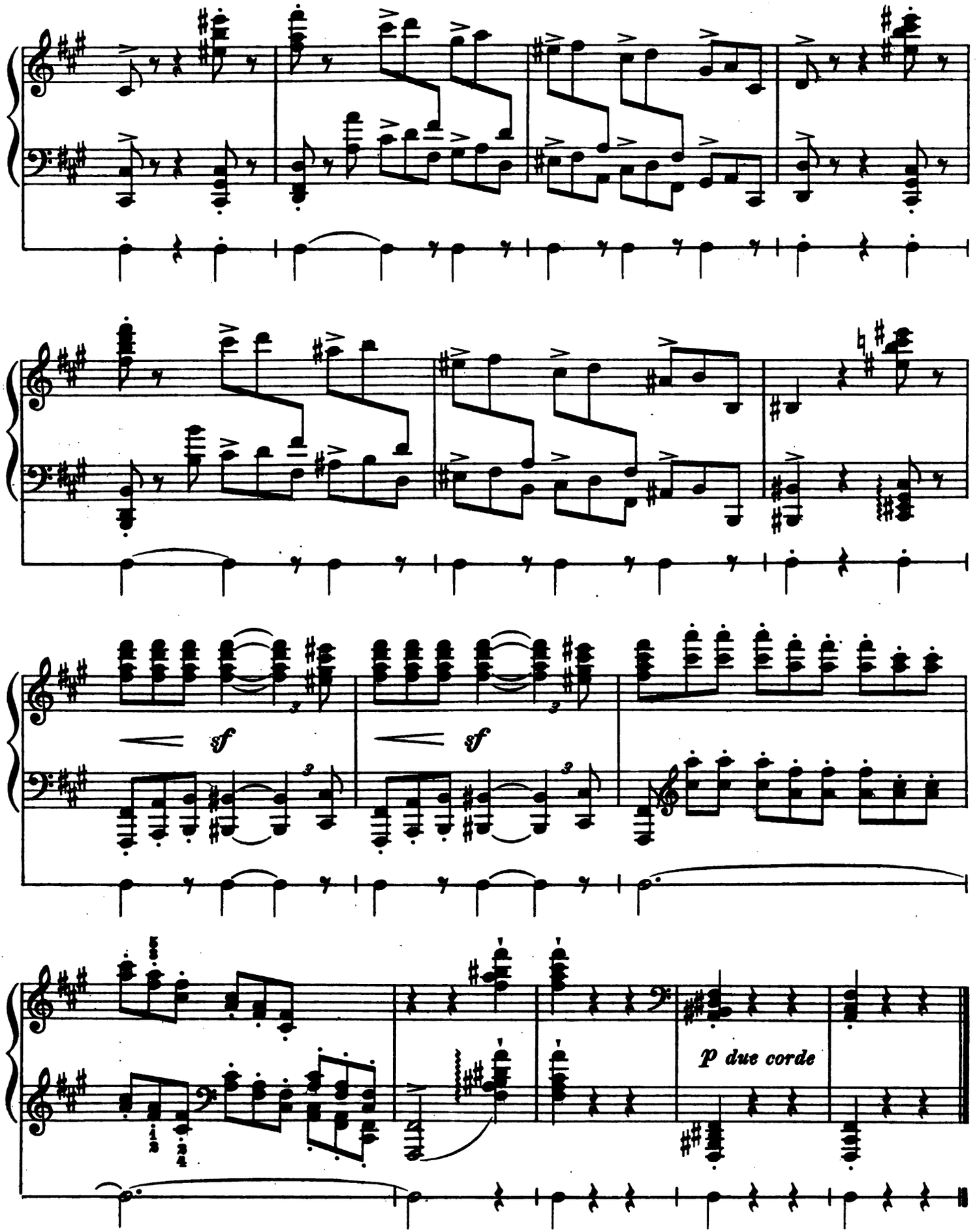

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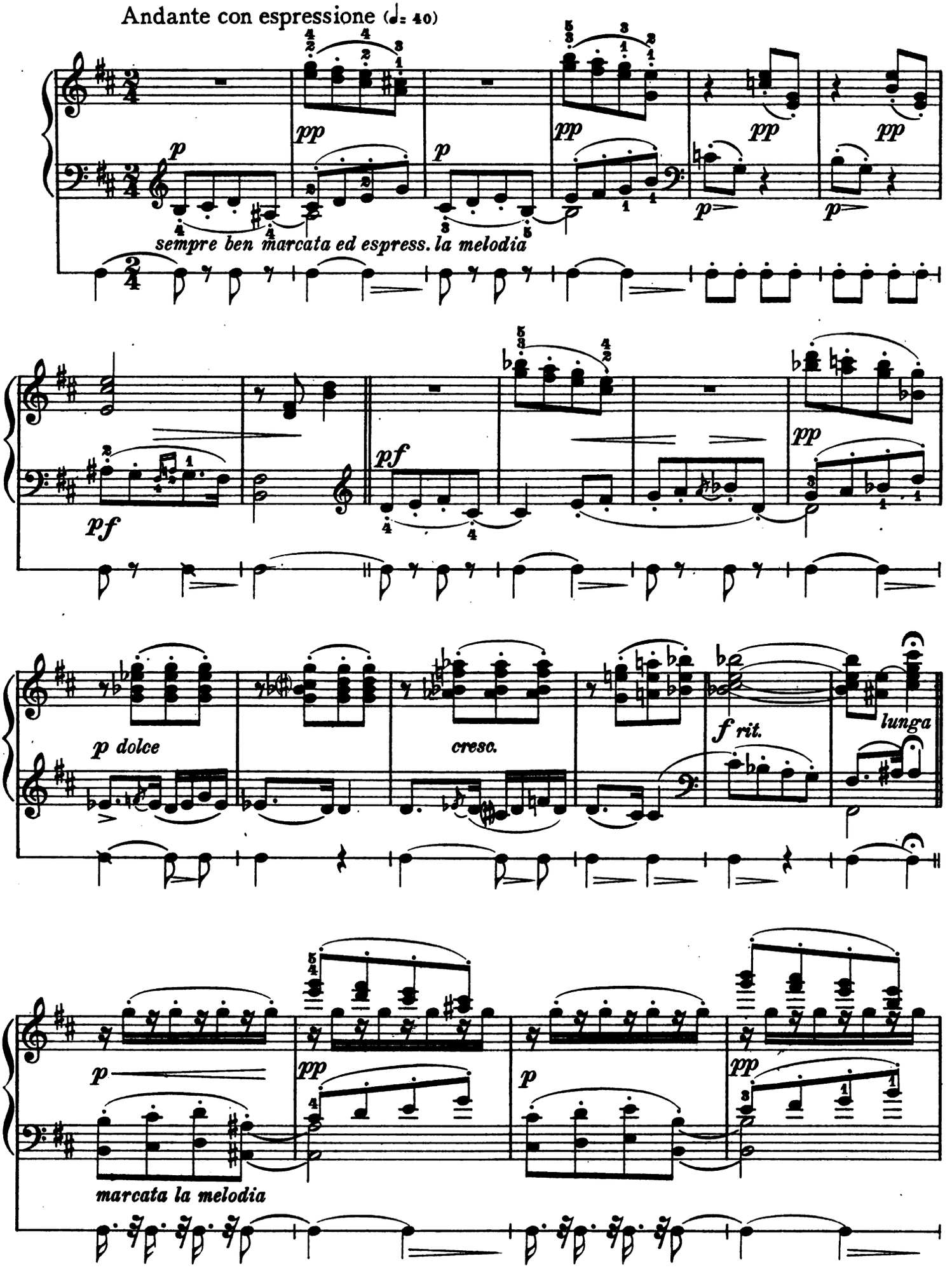

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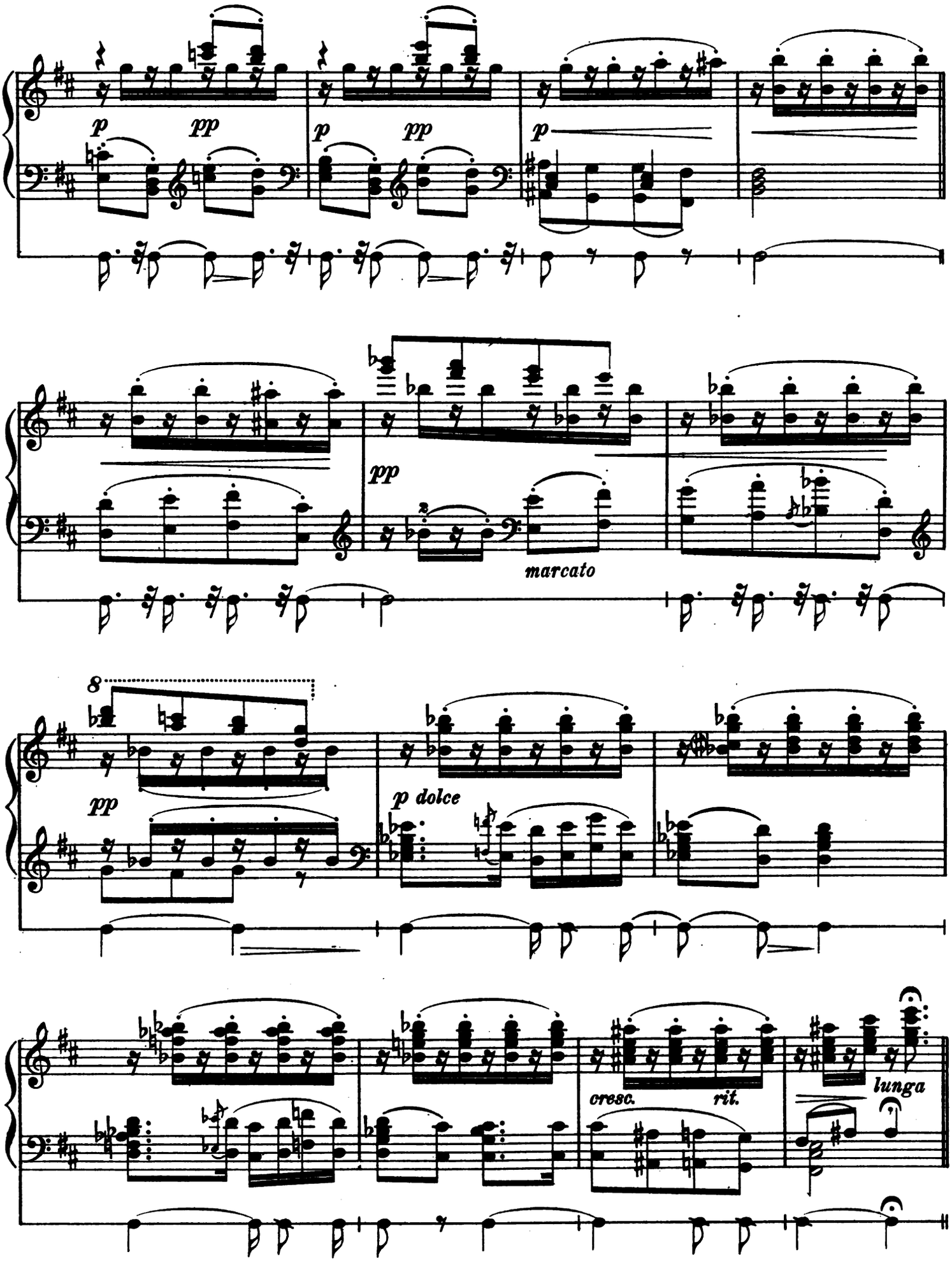

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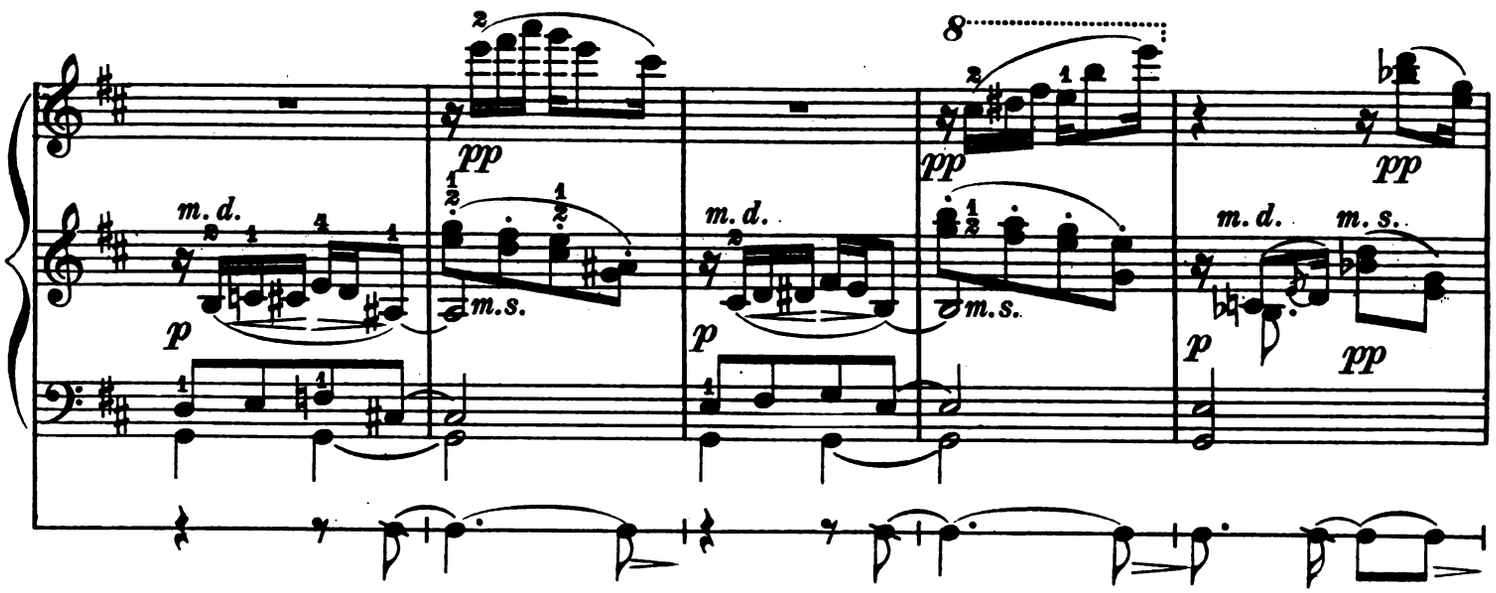

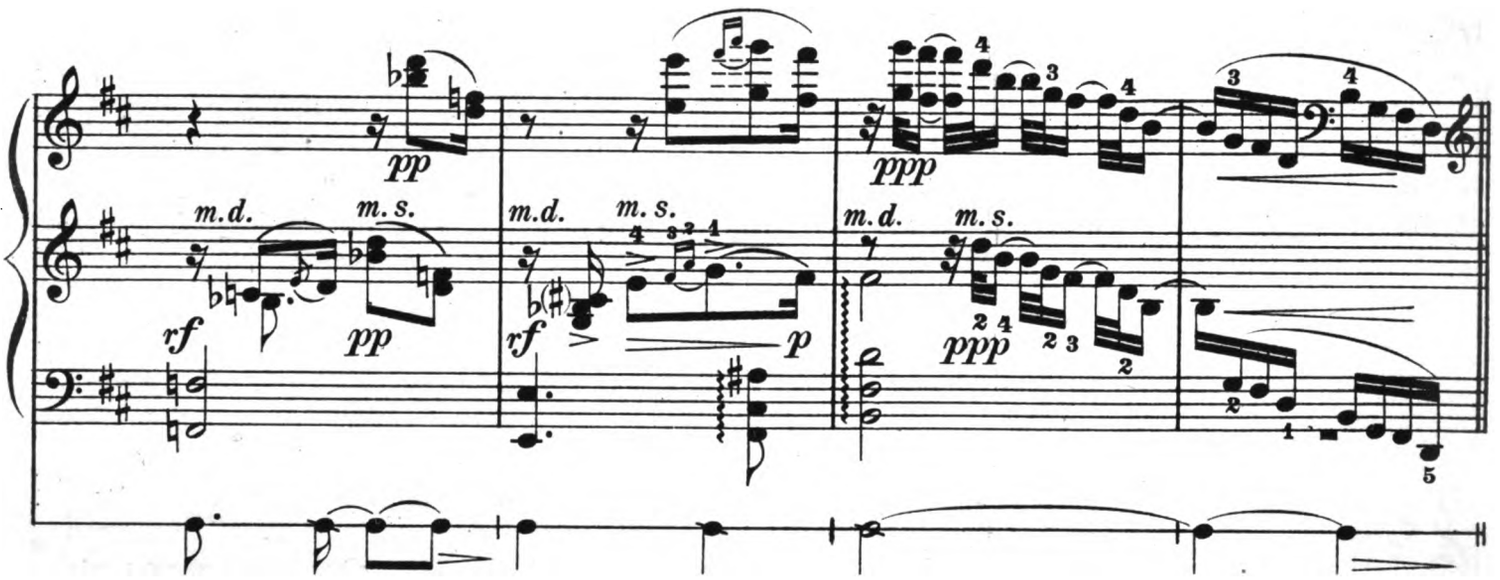

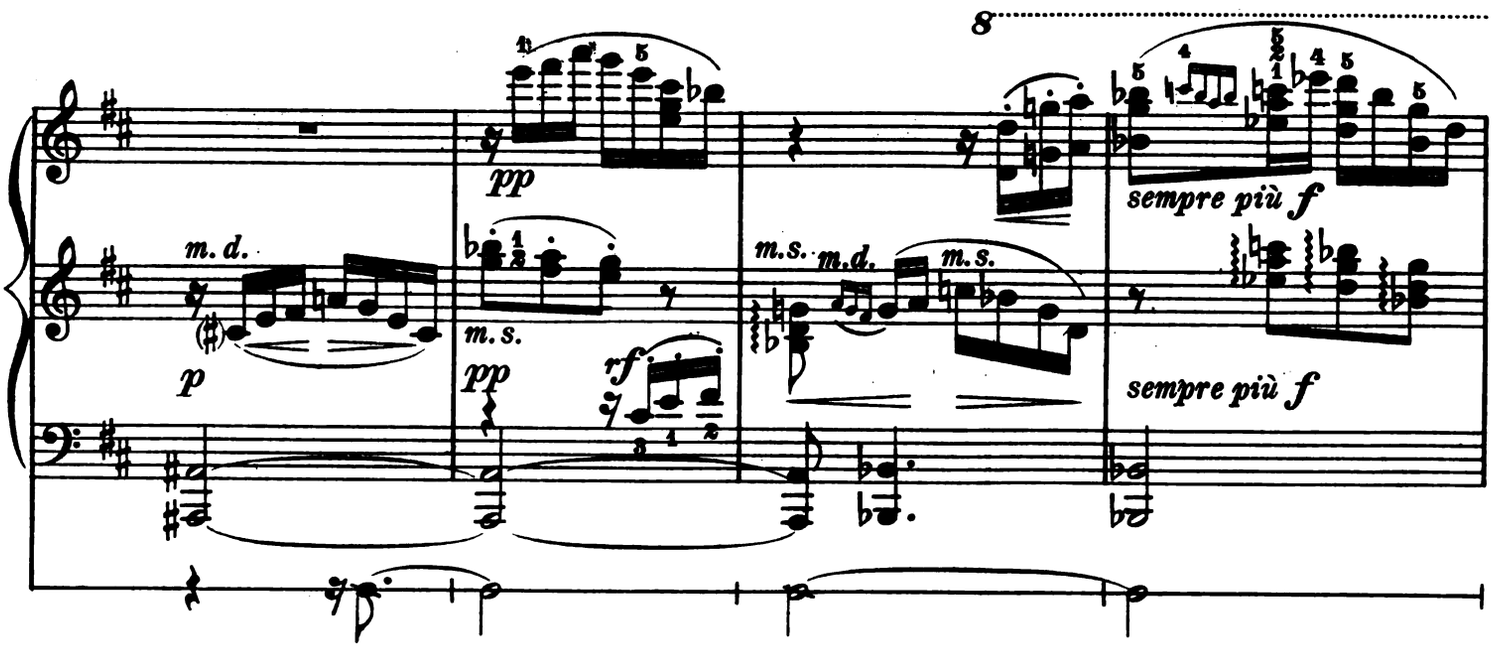

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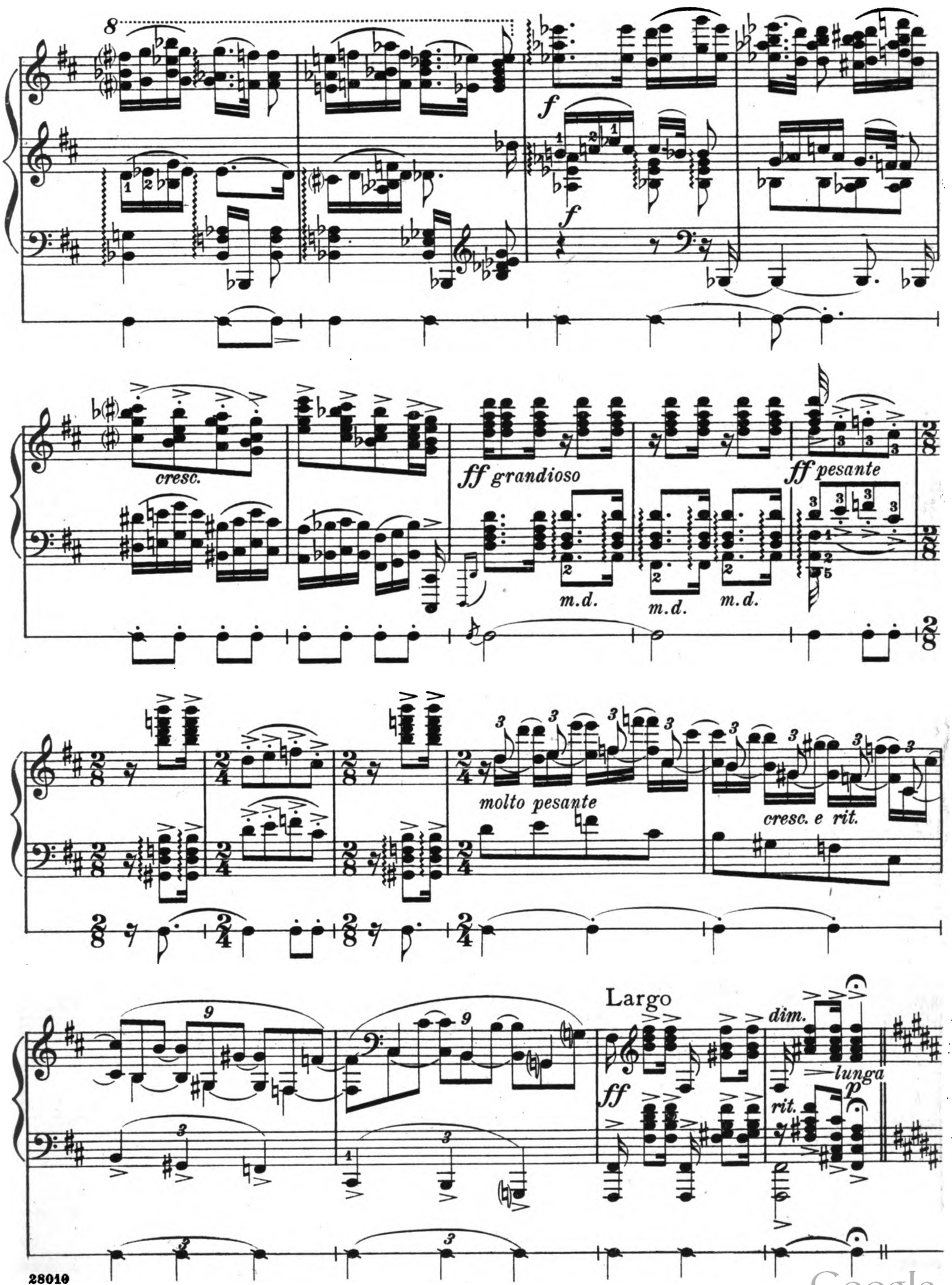

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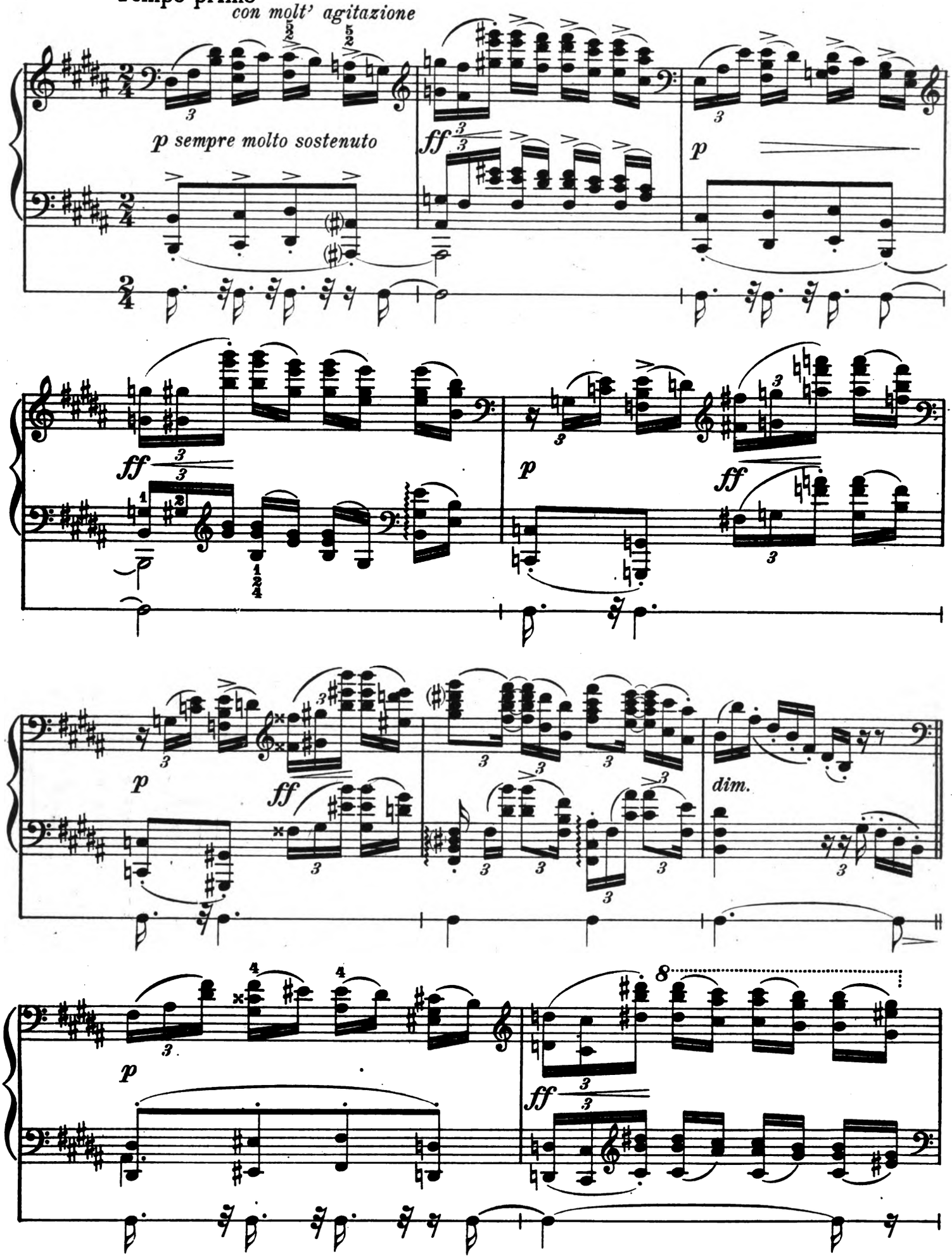
Tempo primo

con molt' agitazione



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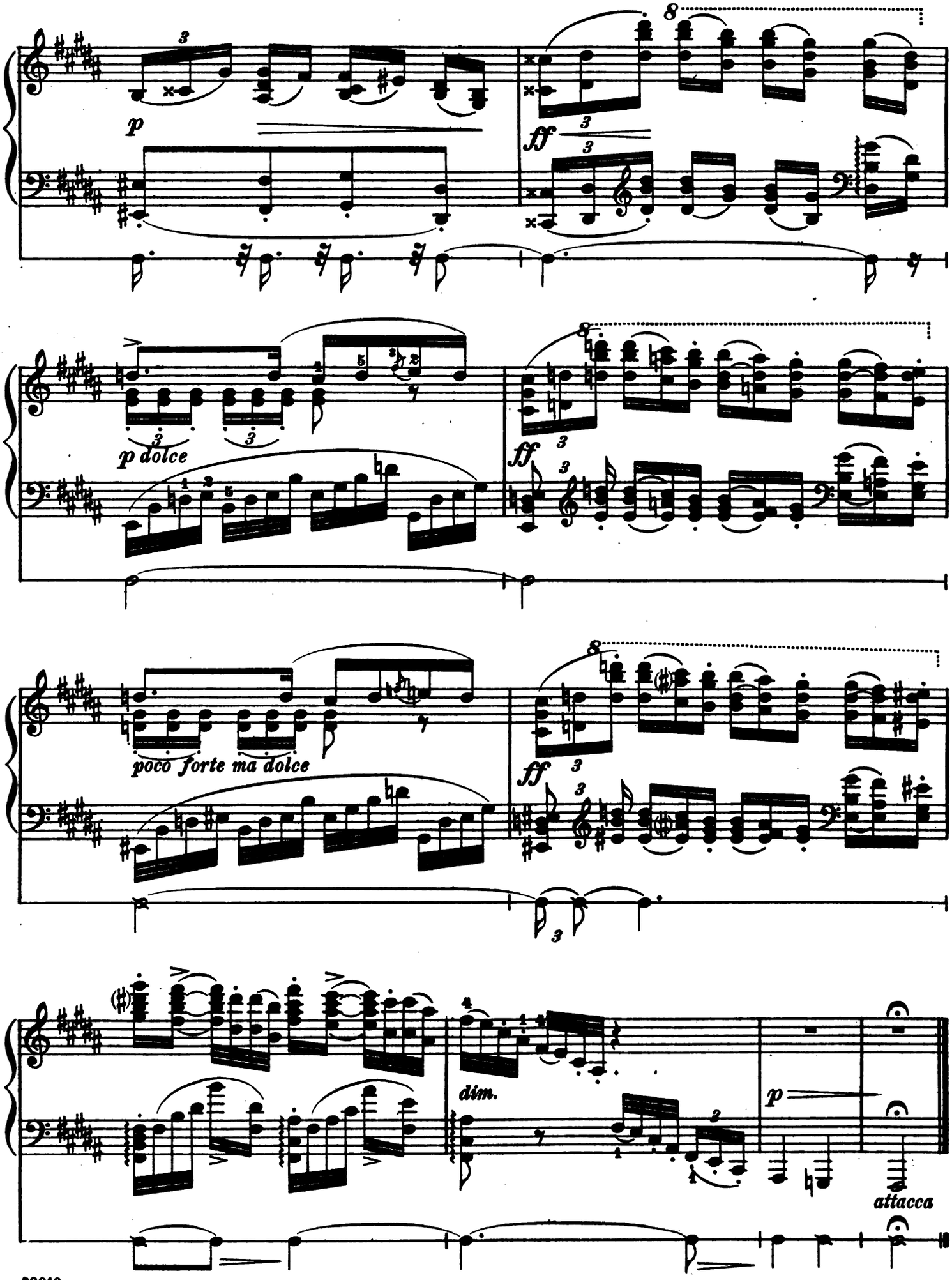

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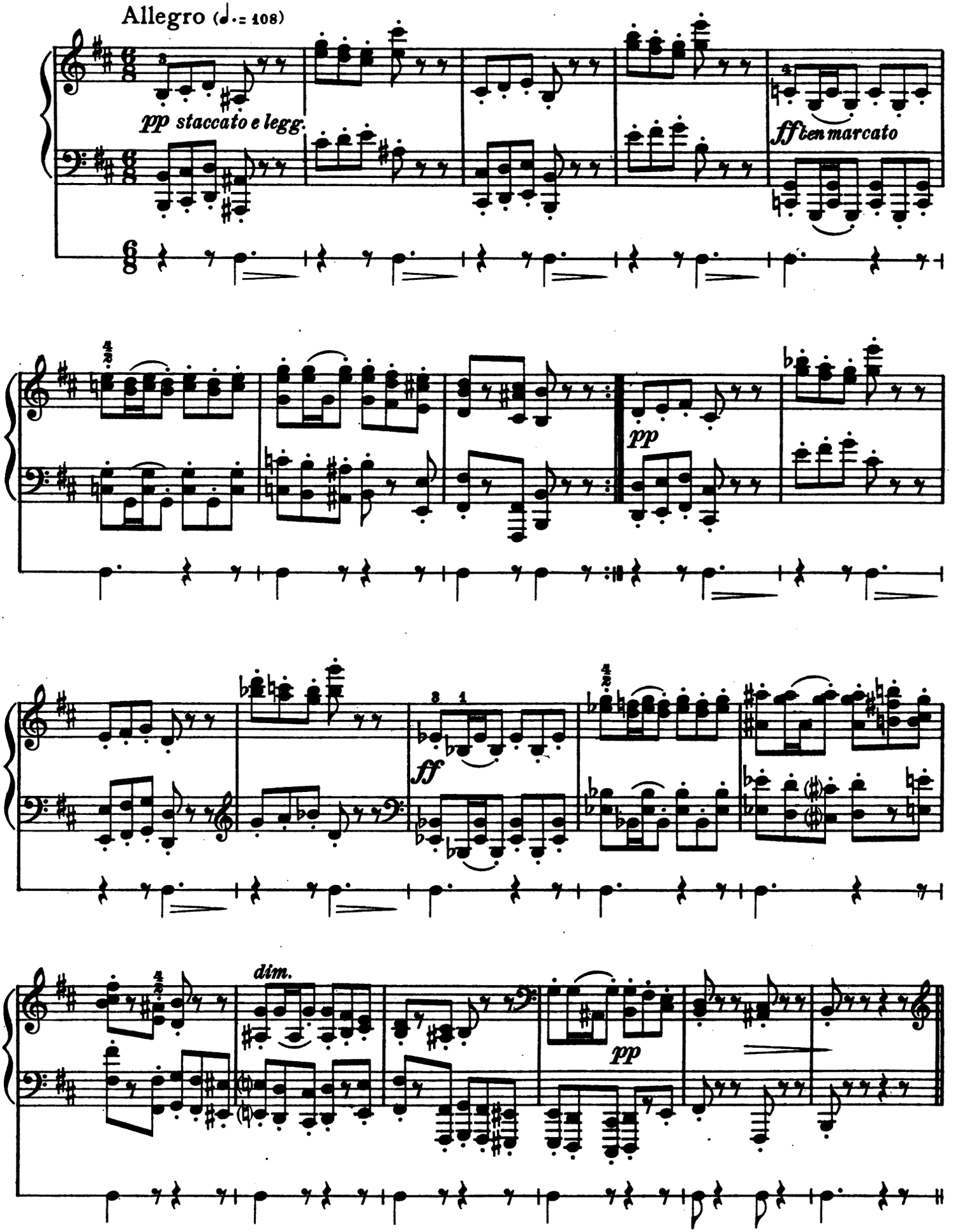
Scherzo

Allegro (♩. = 108)



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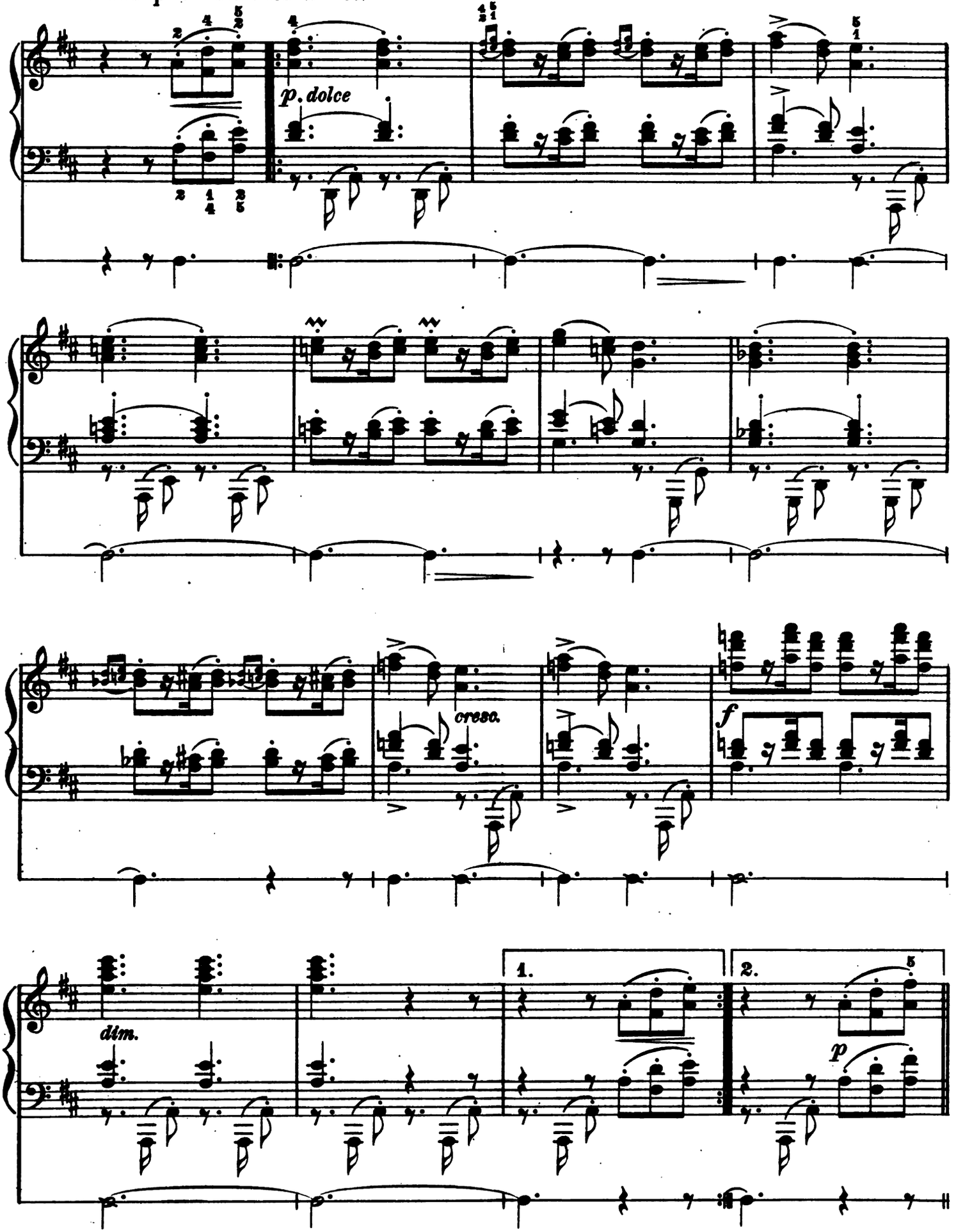
Trio

Poco più moderato (♩. = 80)



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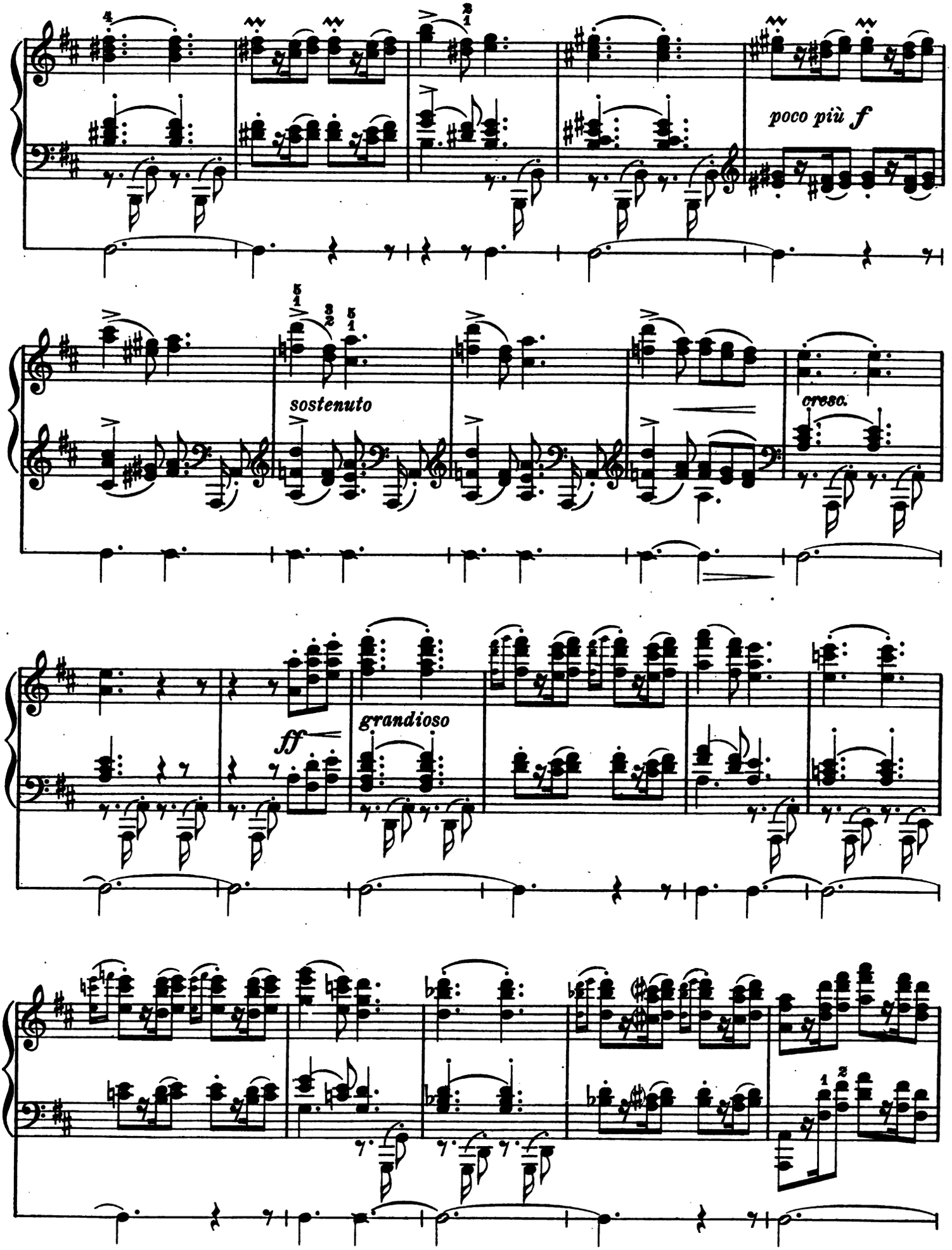

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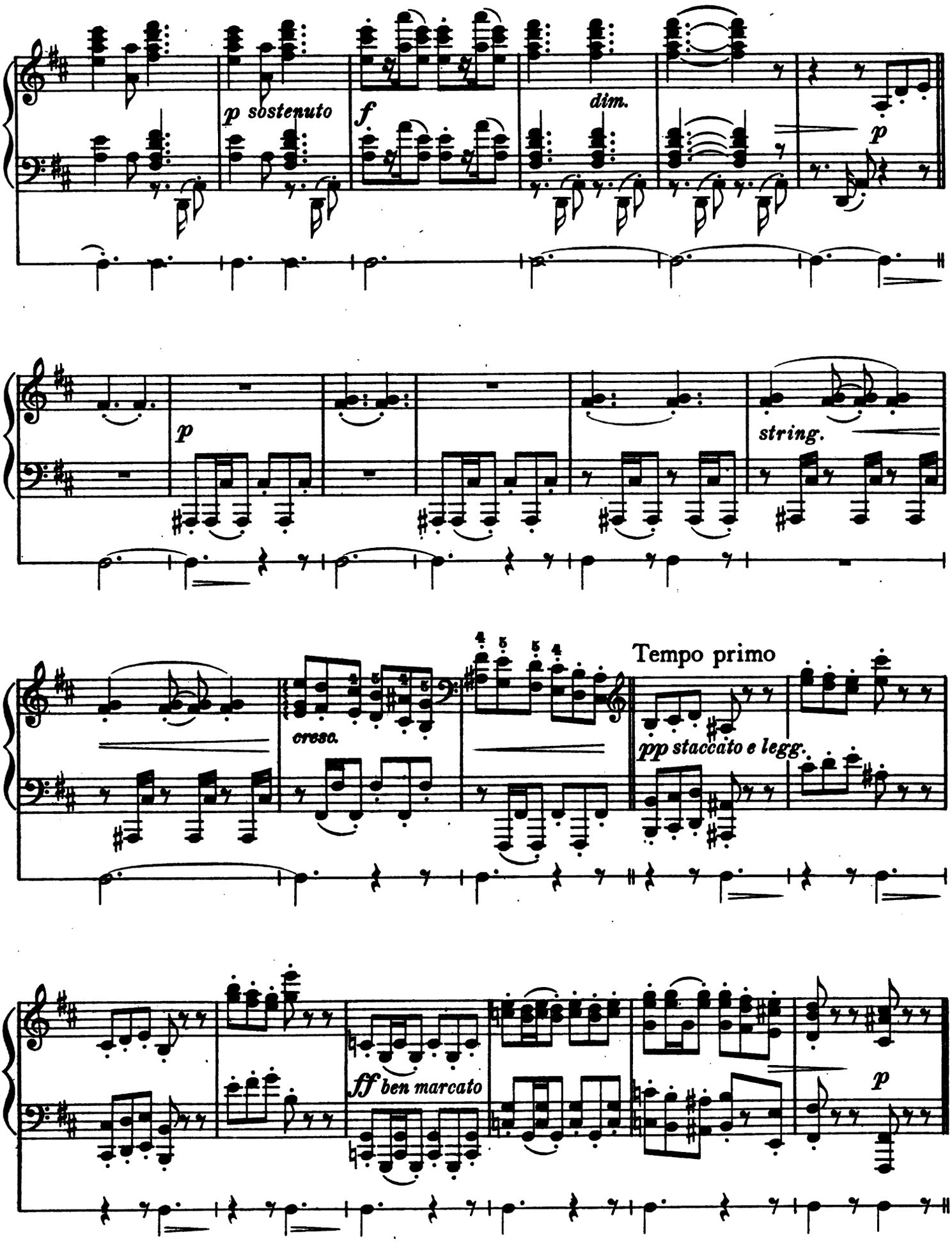

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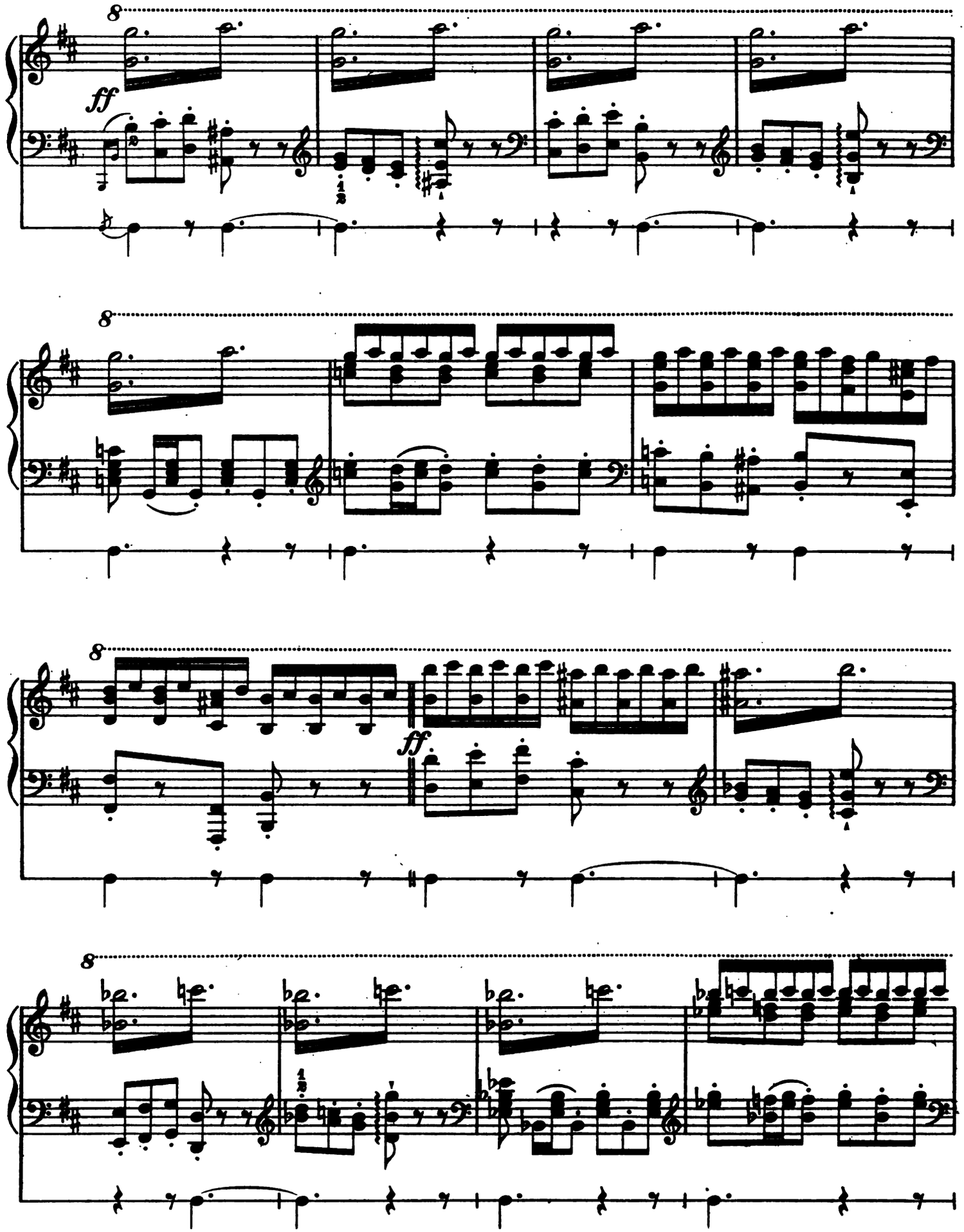

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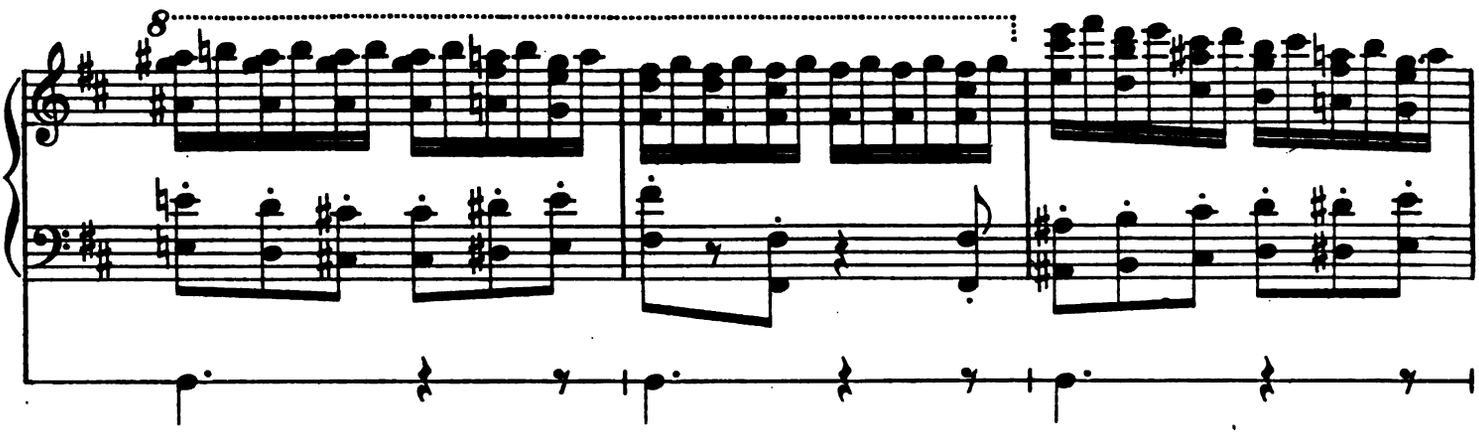

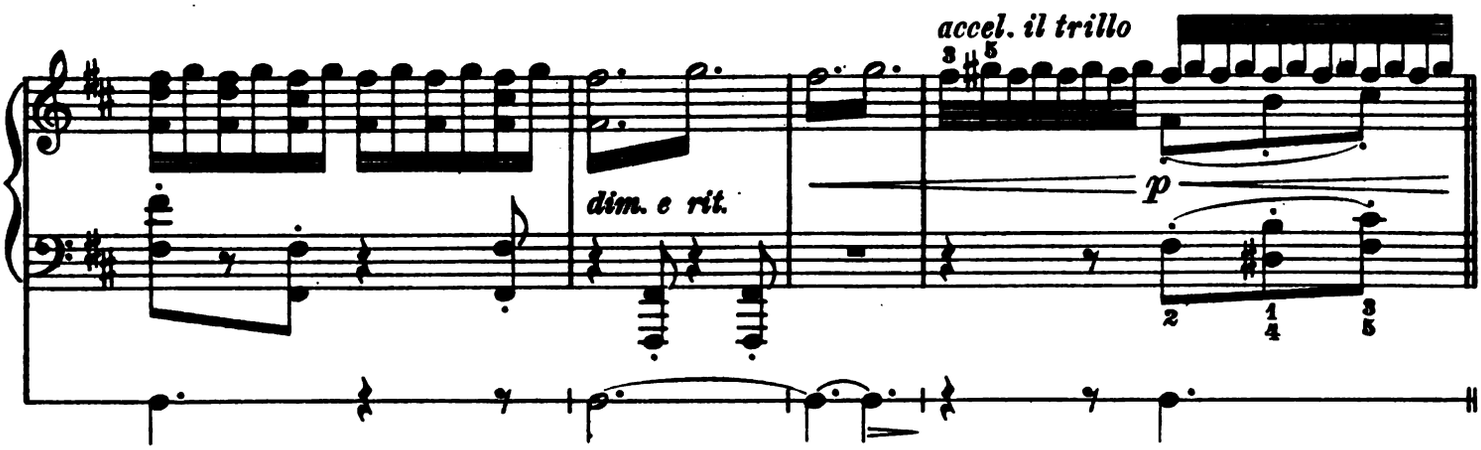

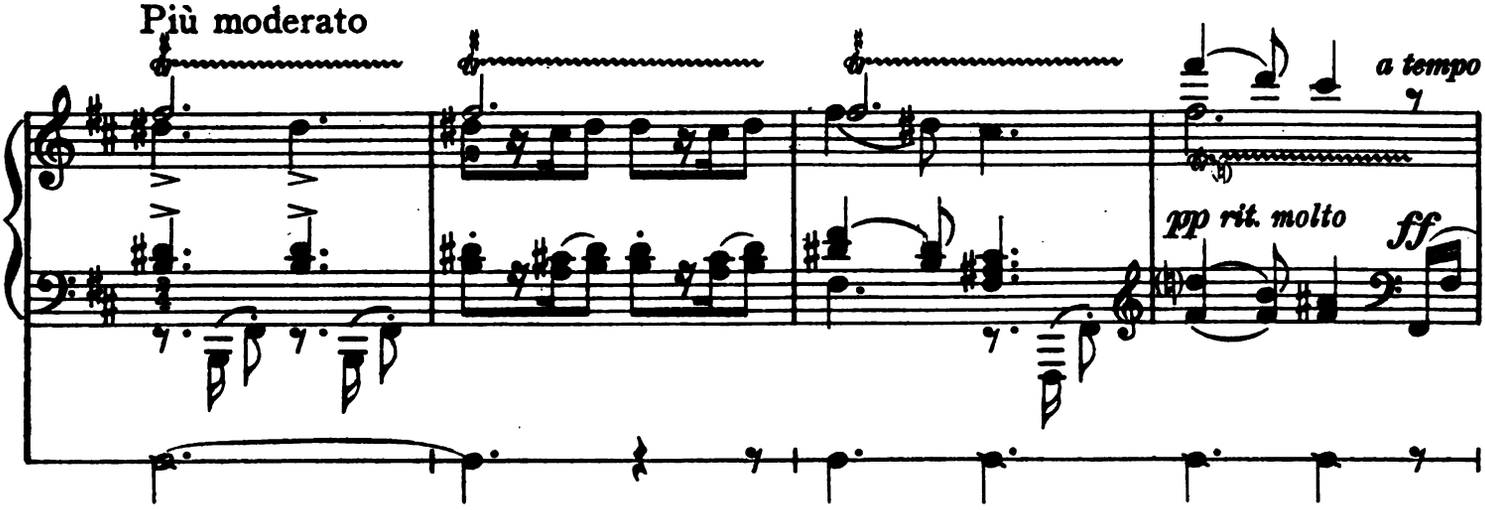

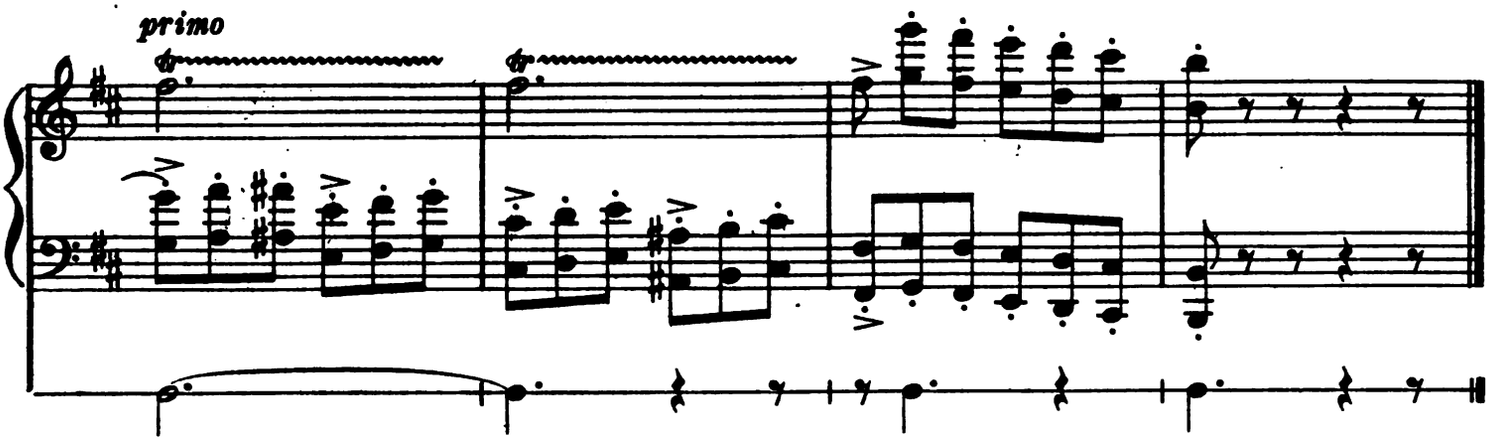

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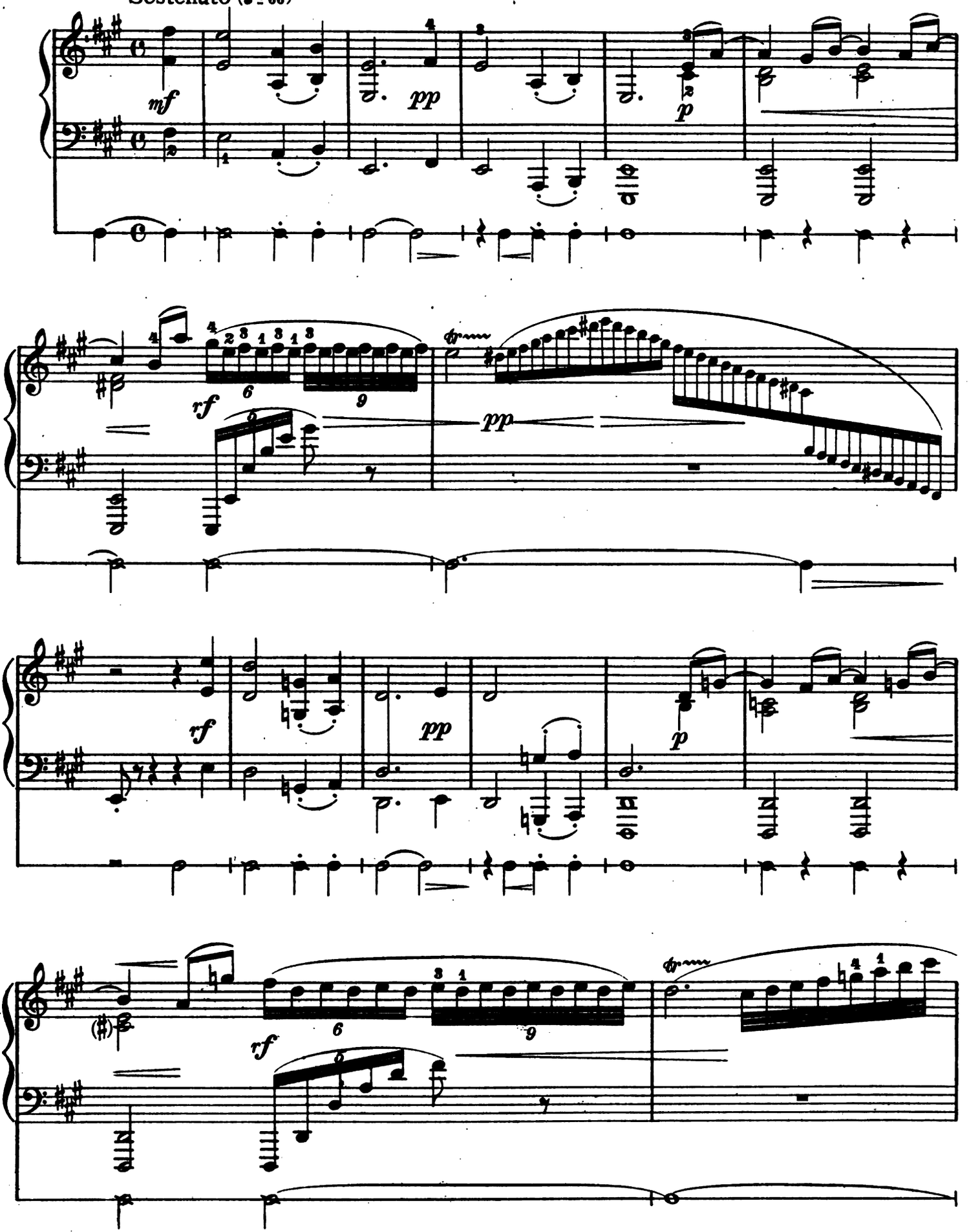
Finale

INTRODUZIONE

Sostenuto (♩ = 66)



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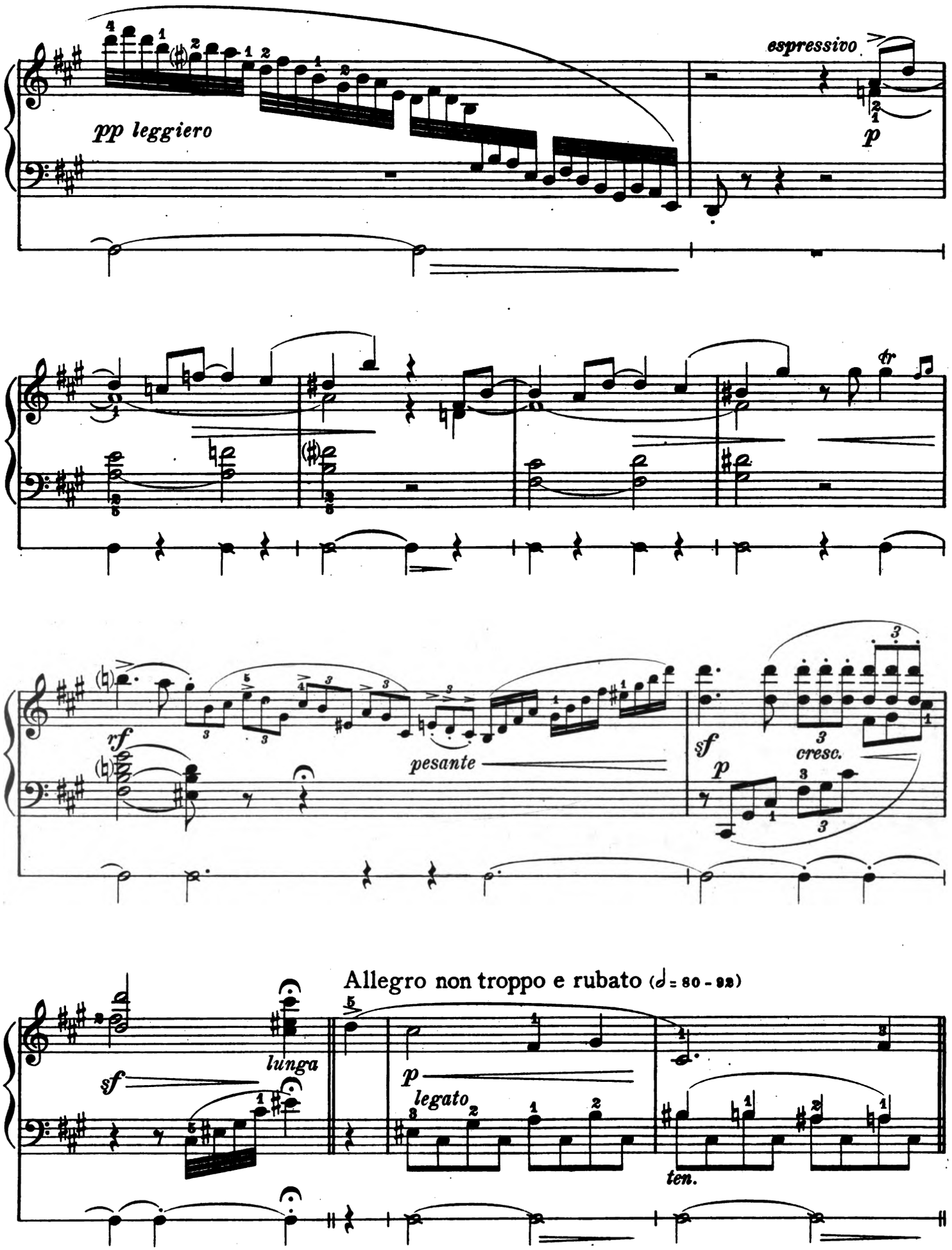

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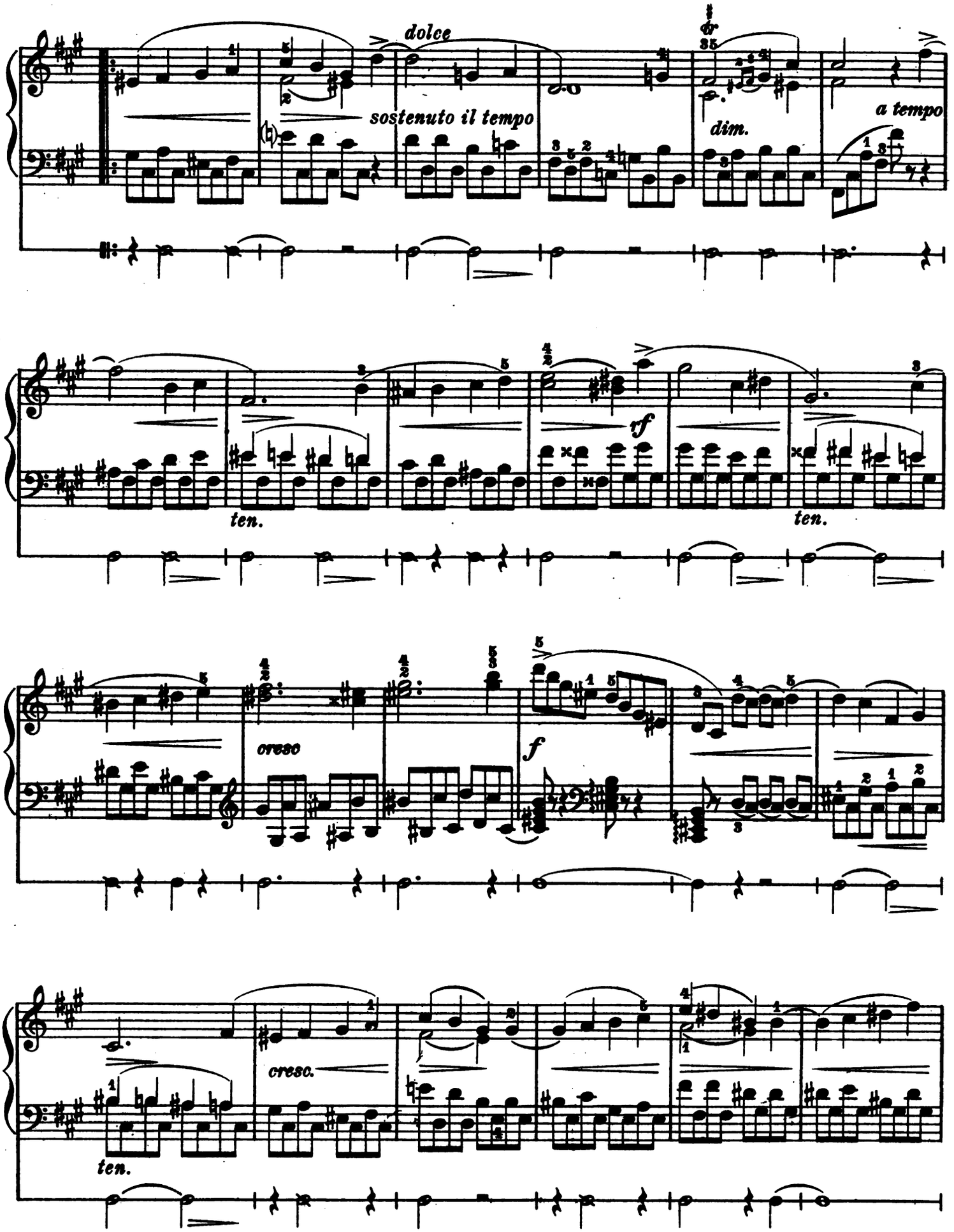

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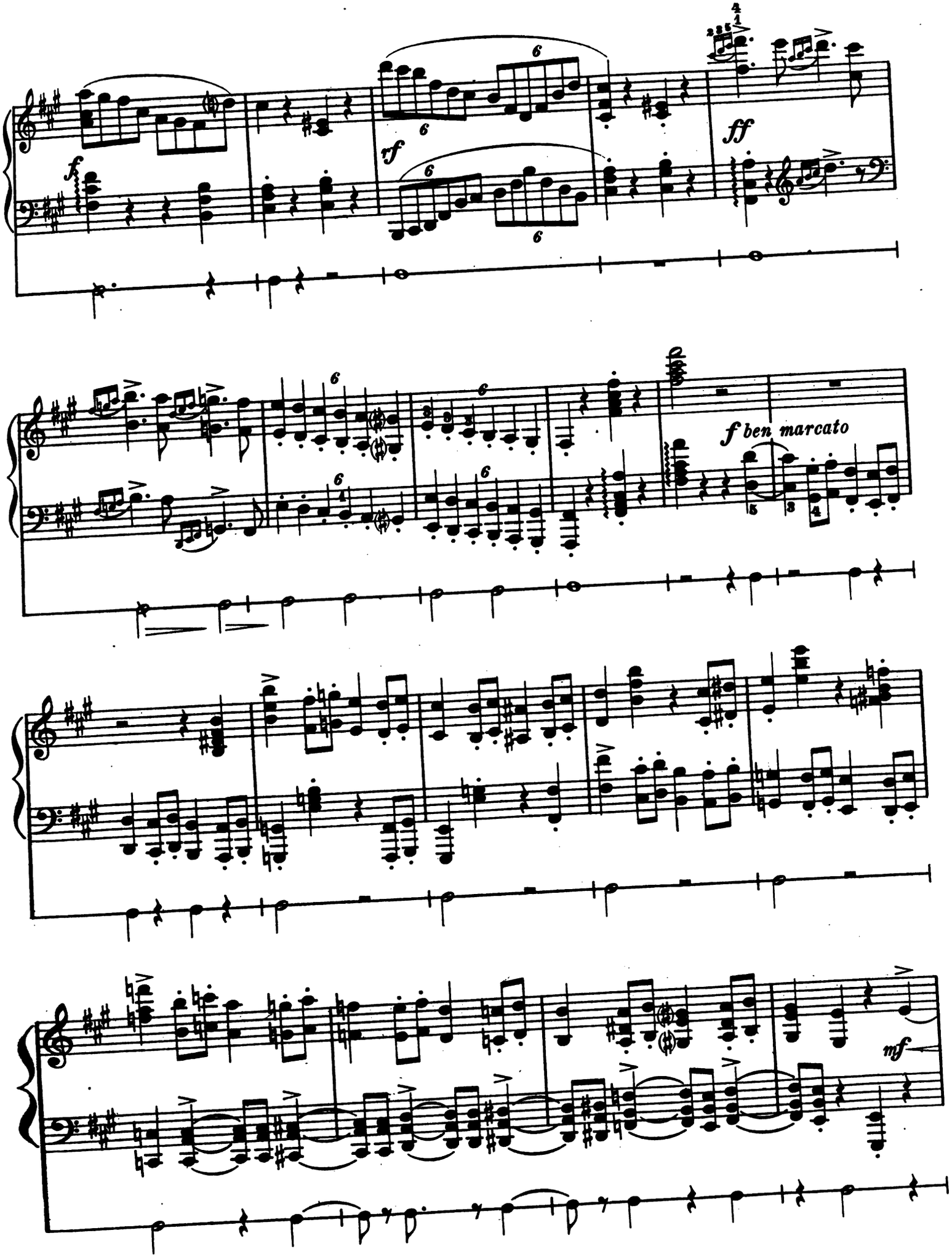

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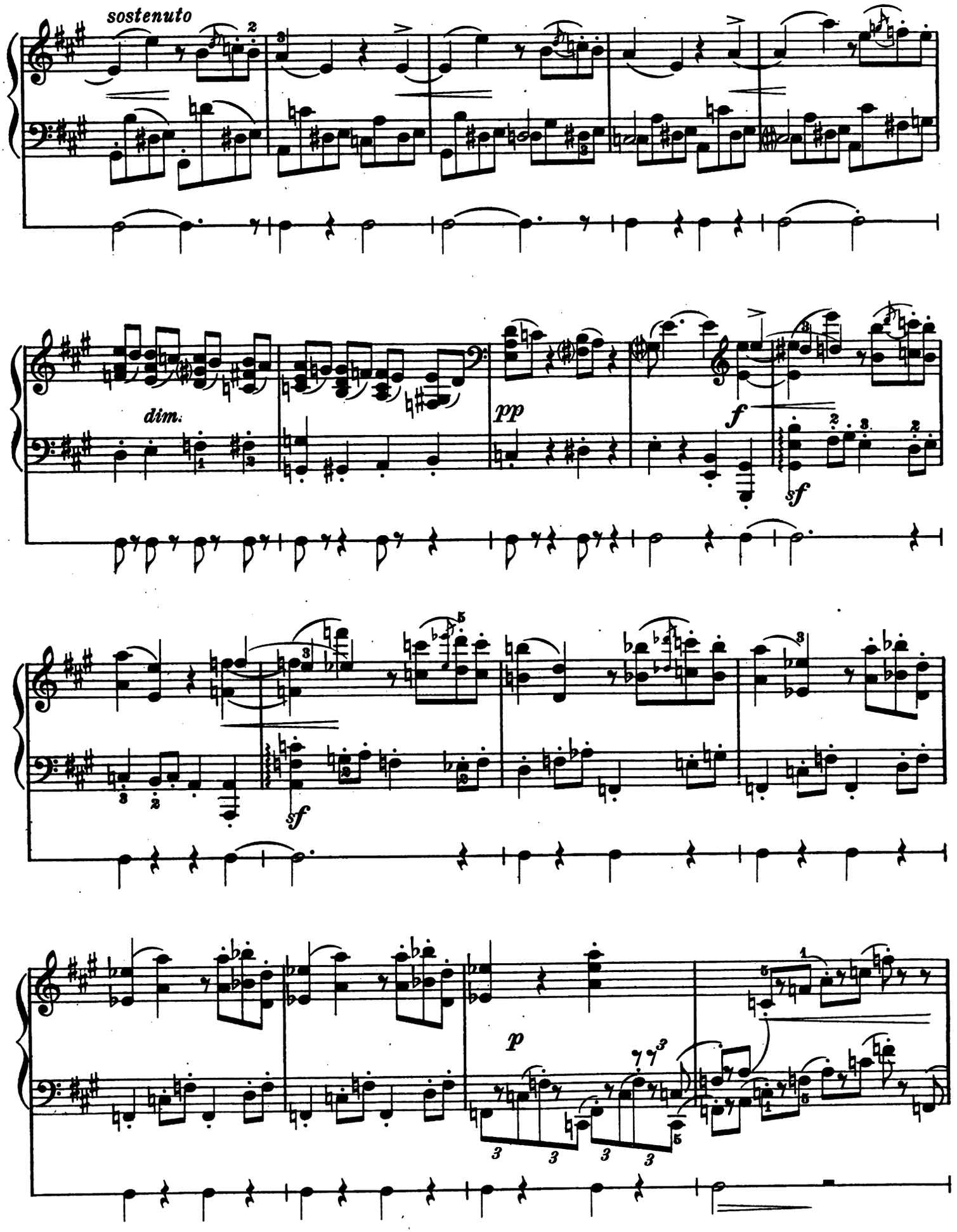

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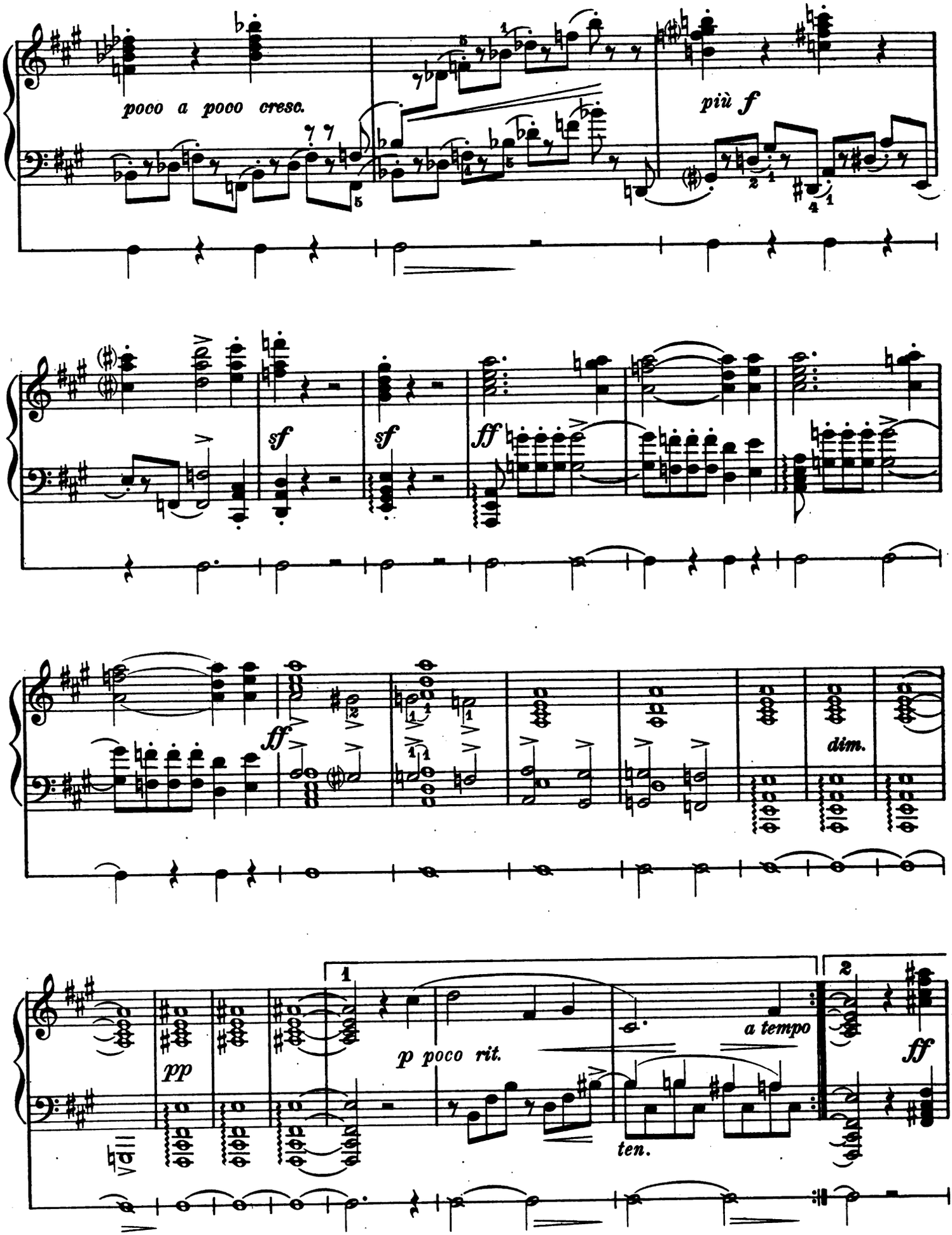

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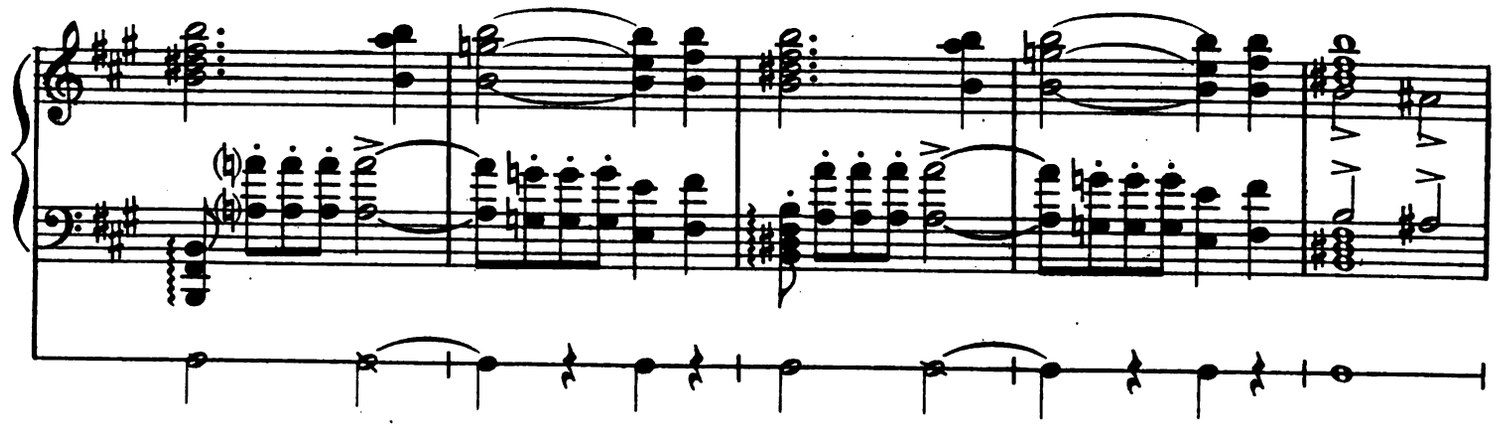

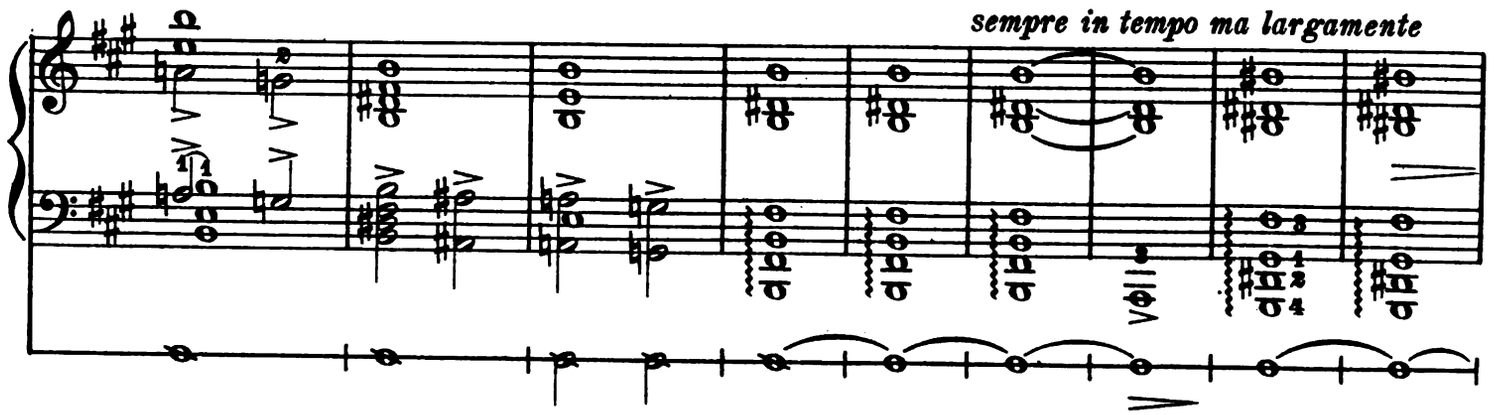

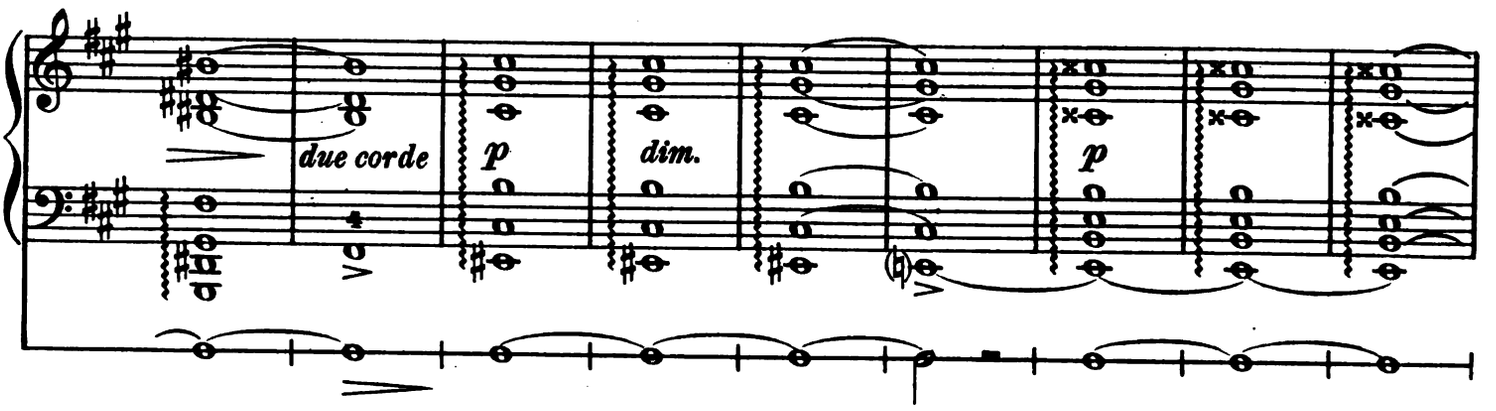

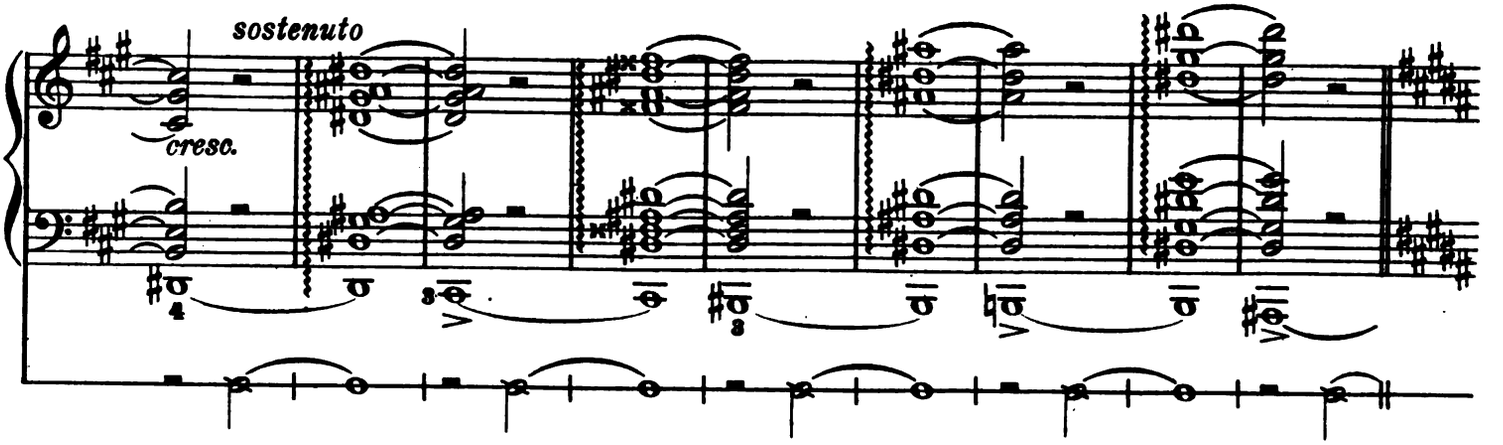

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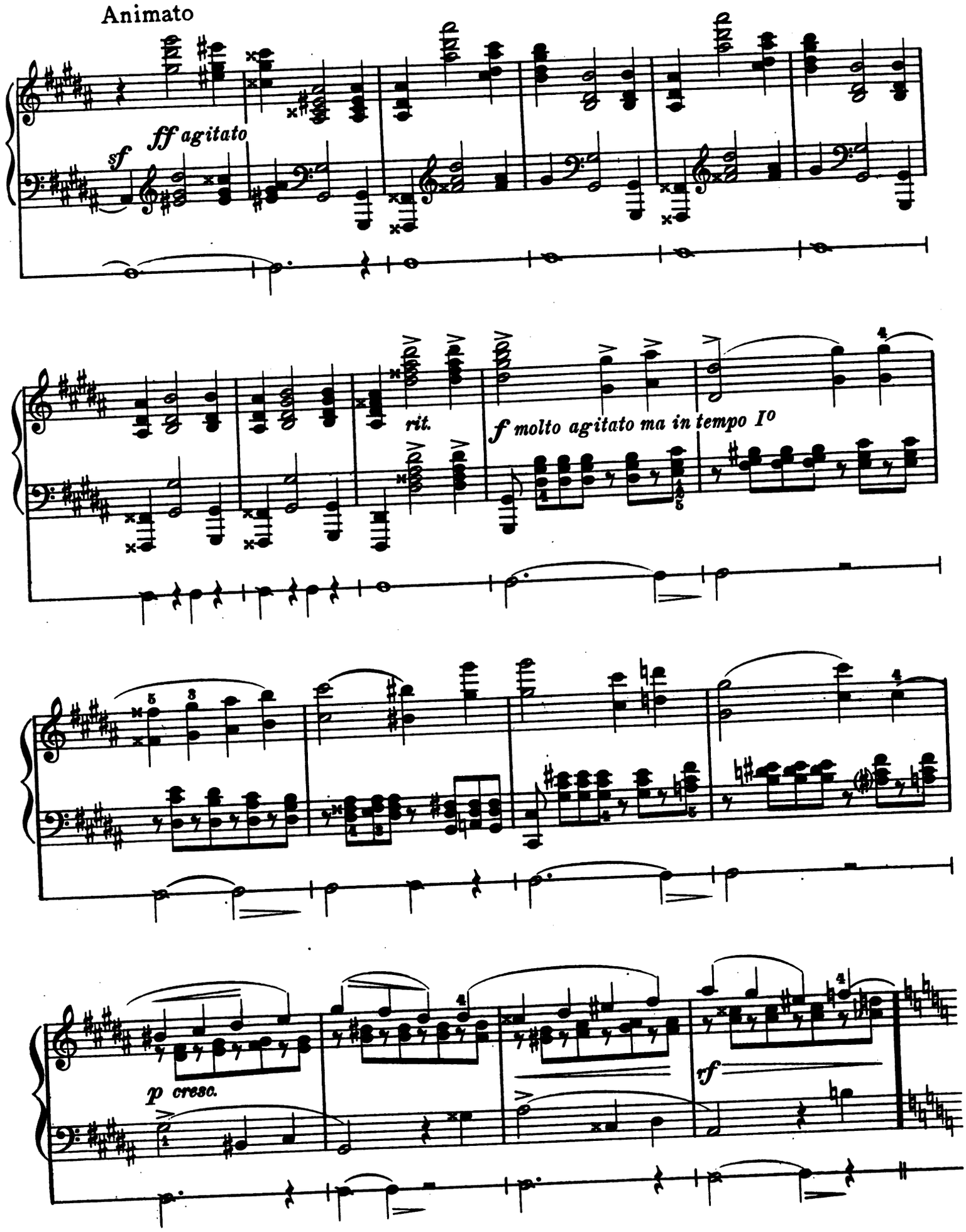

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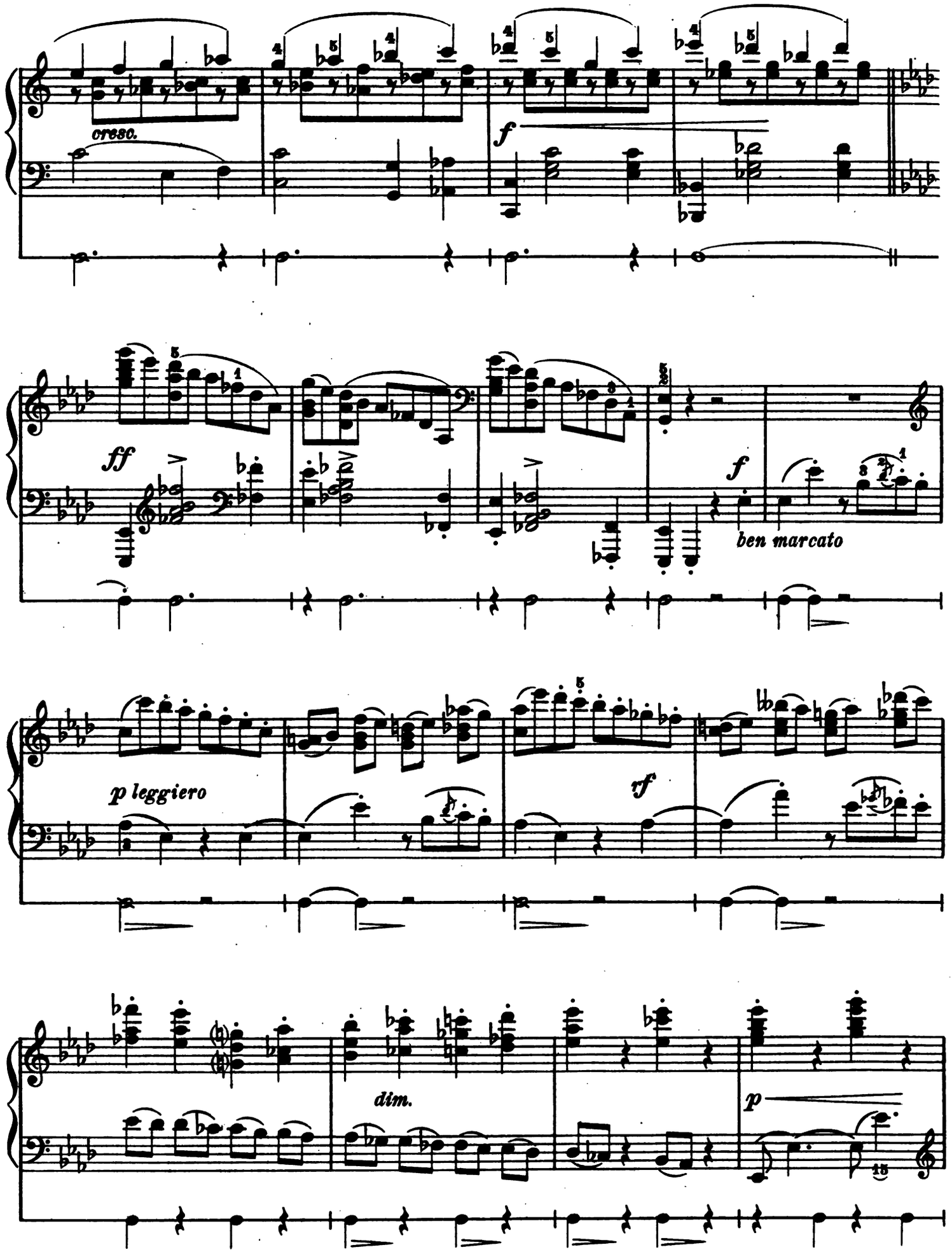

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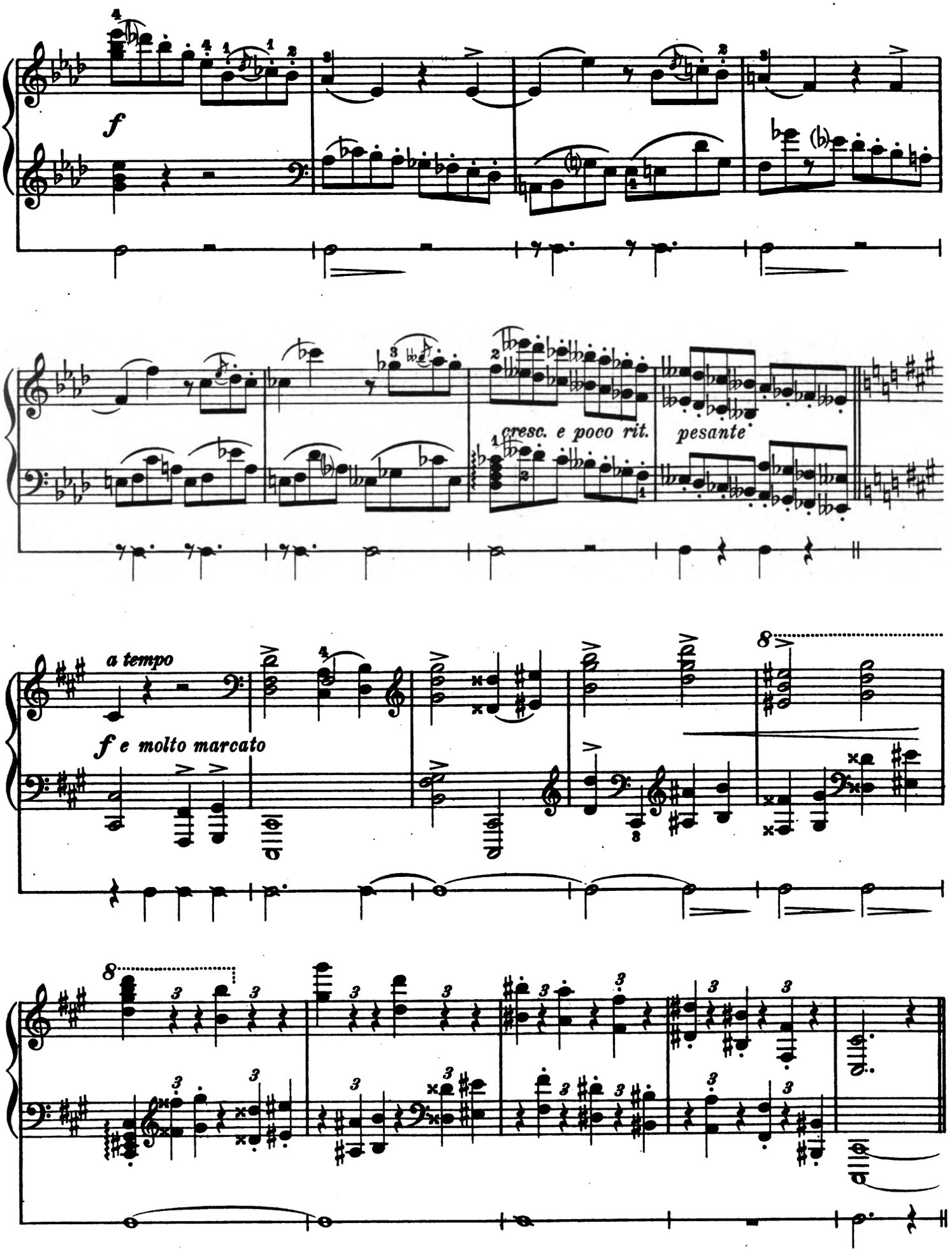

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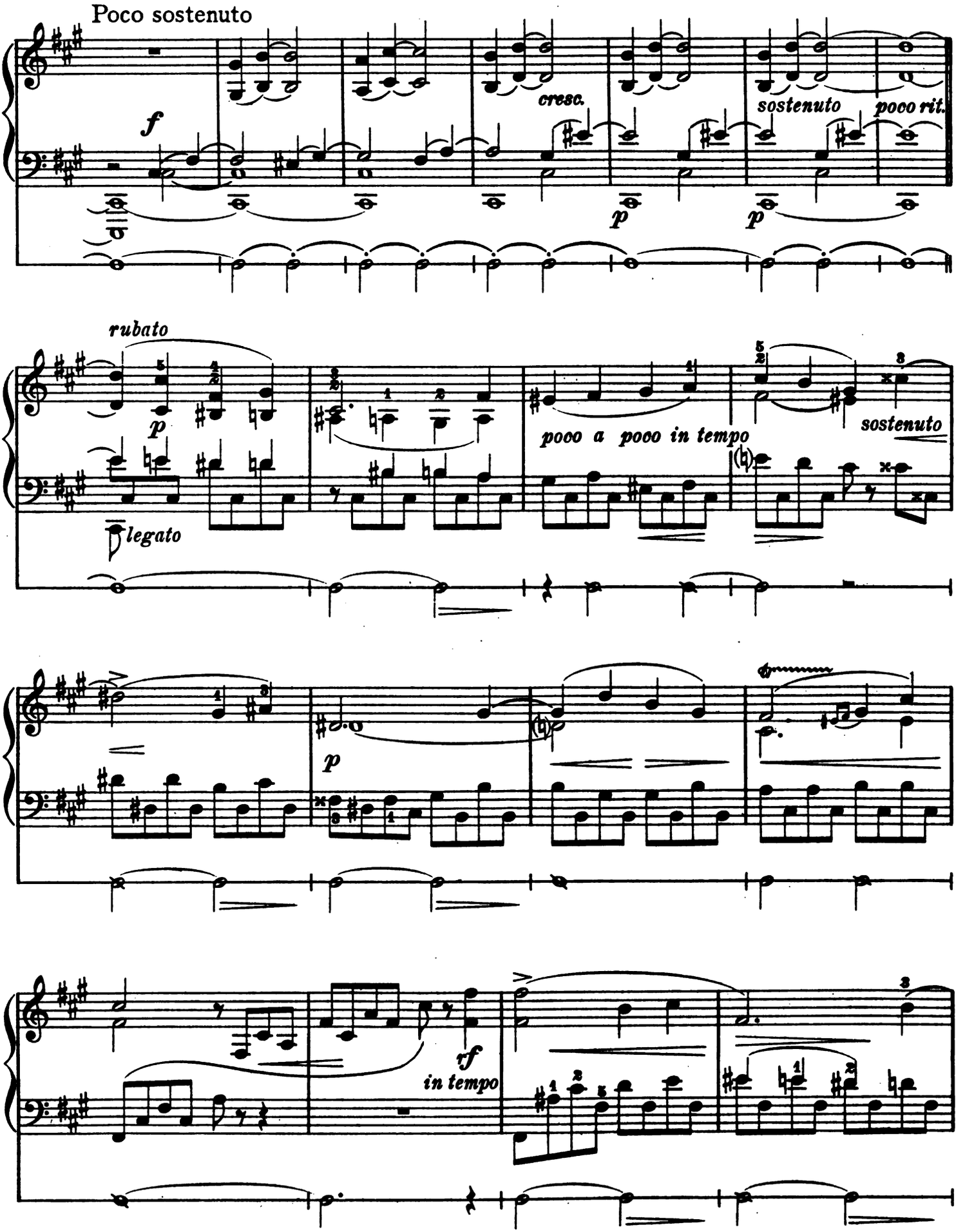

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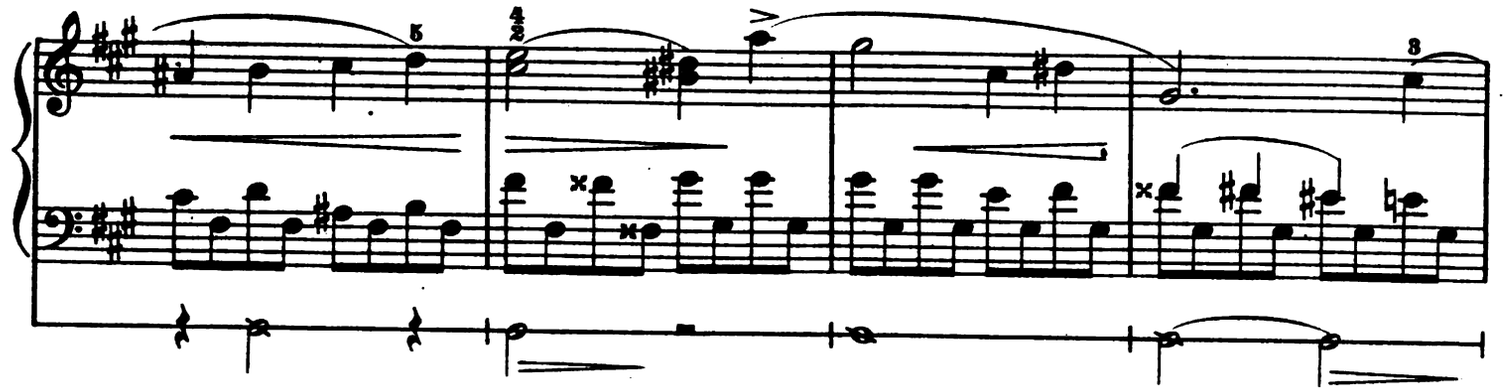

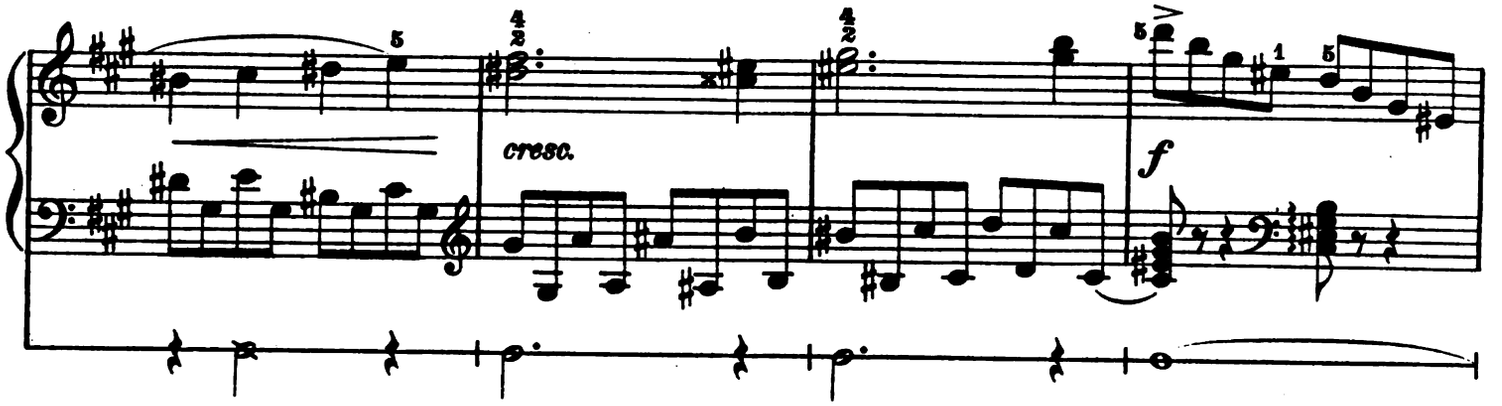

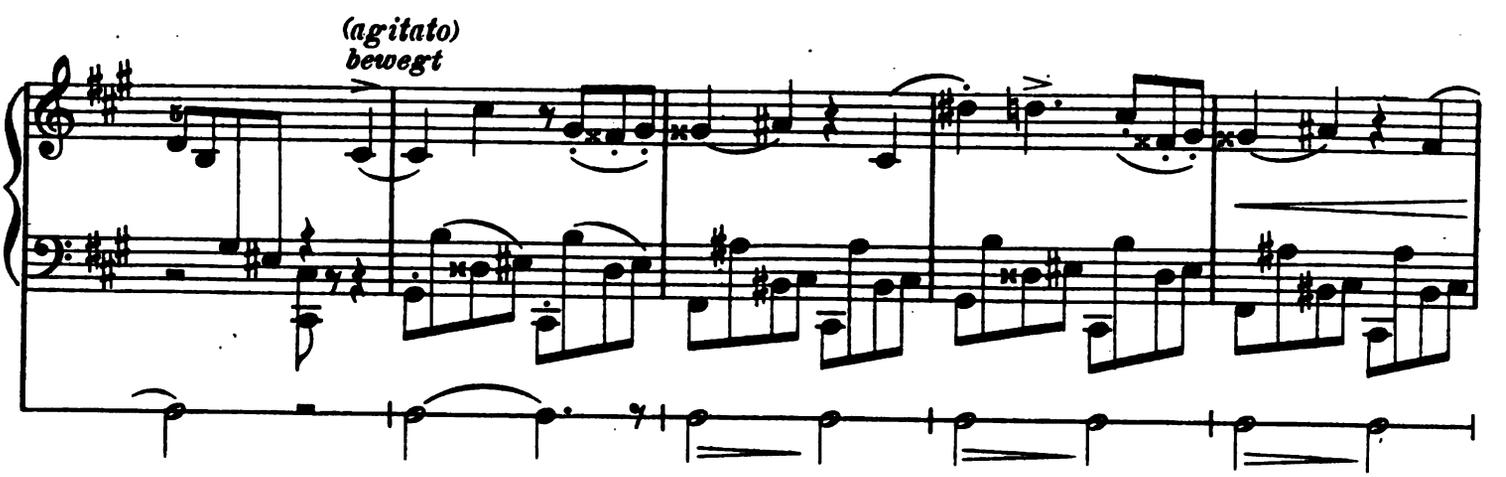

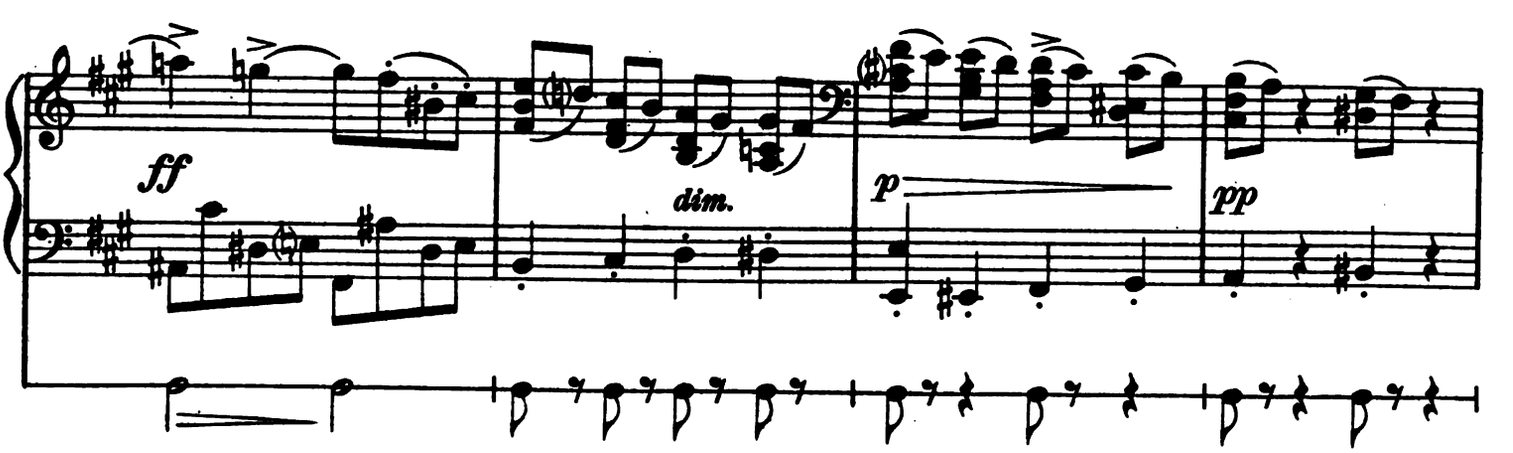

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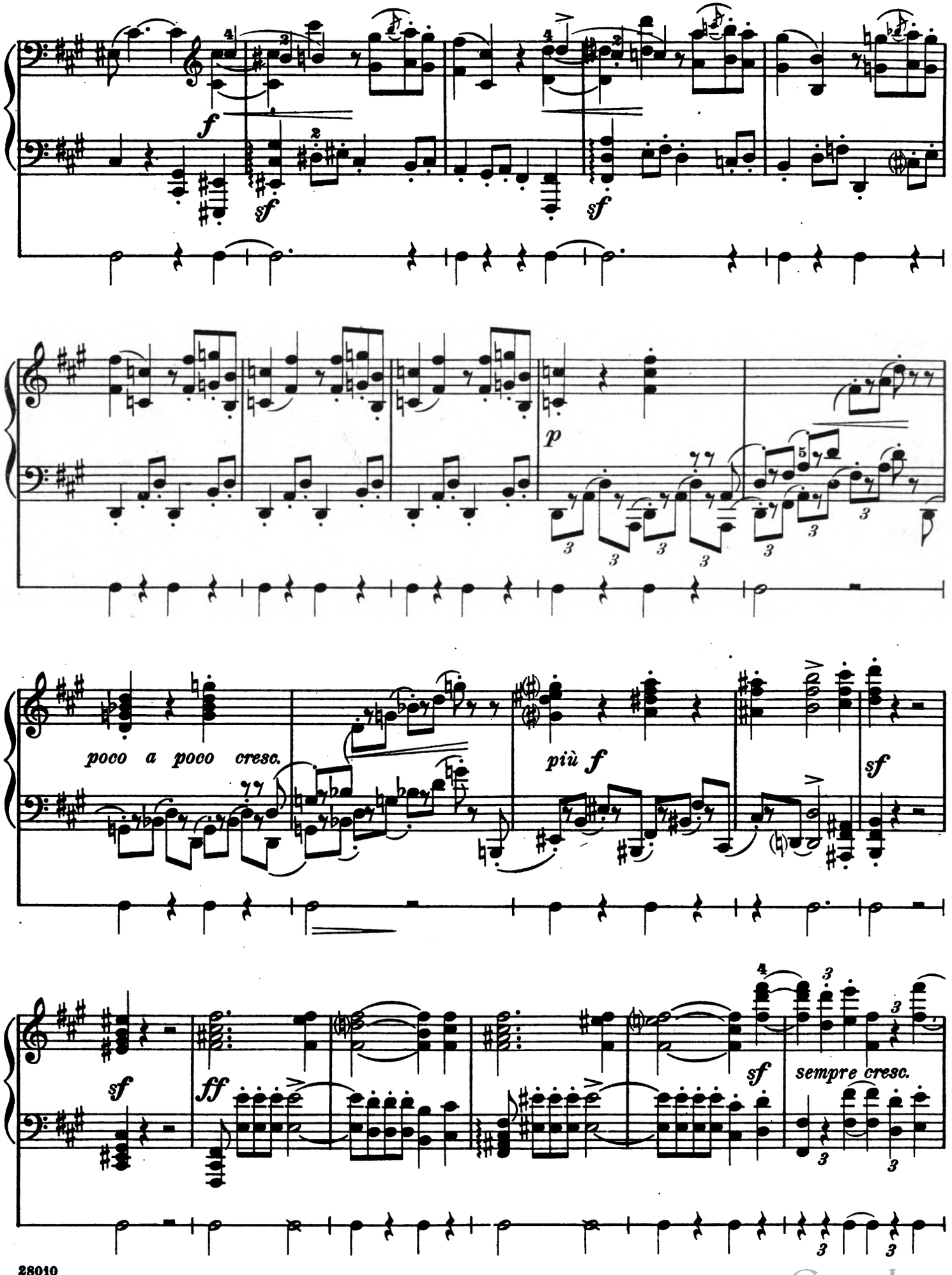

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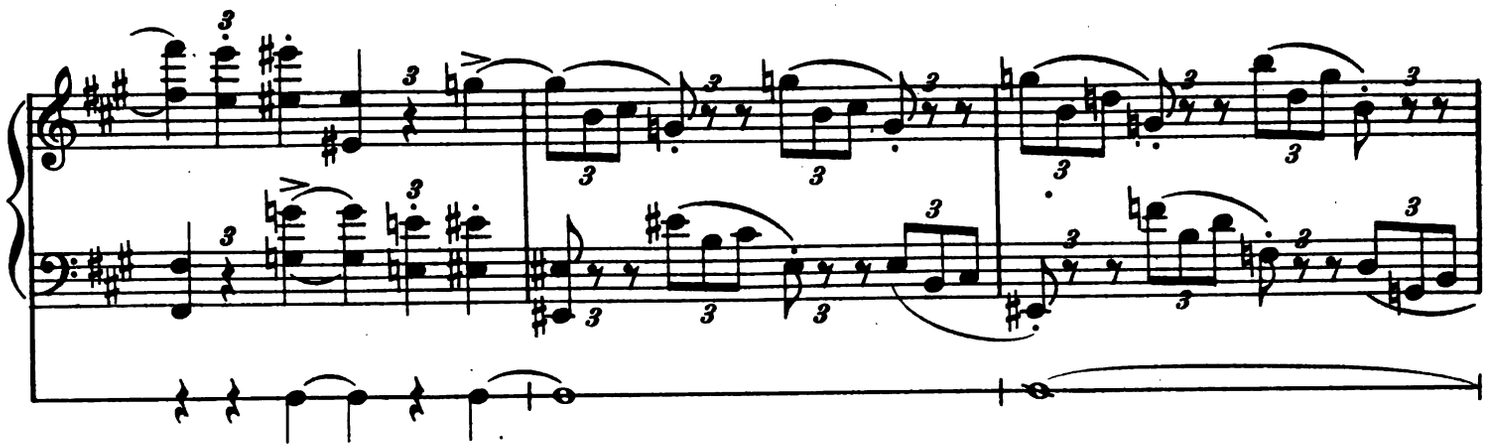

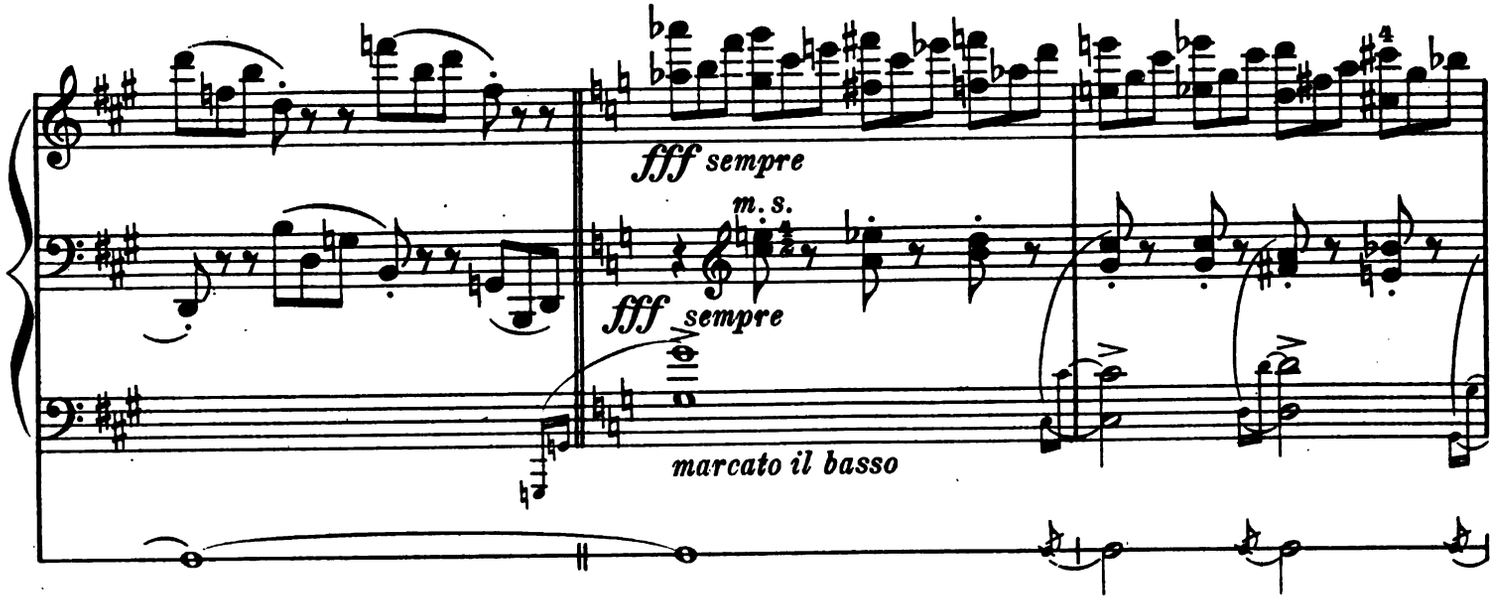

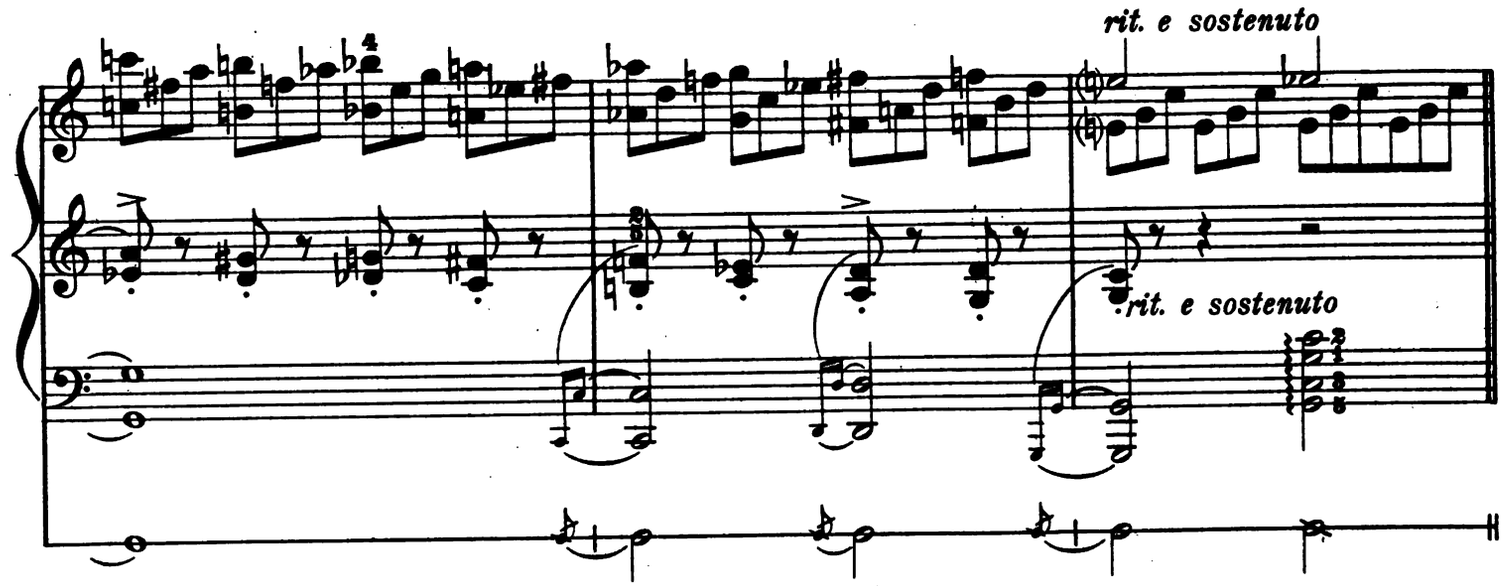

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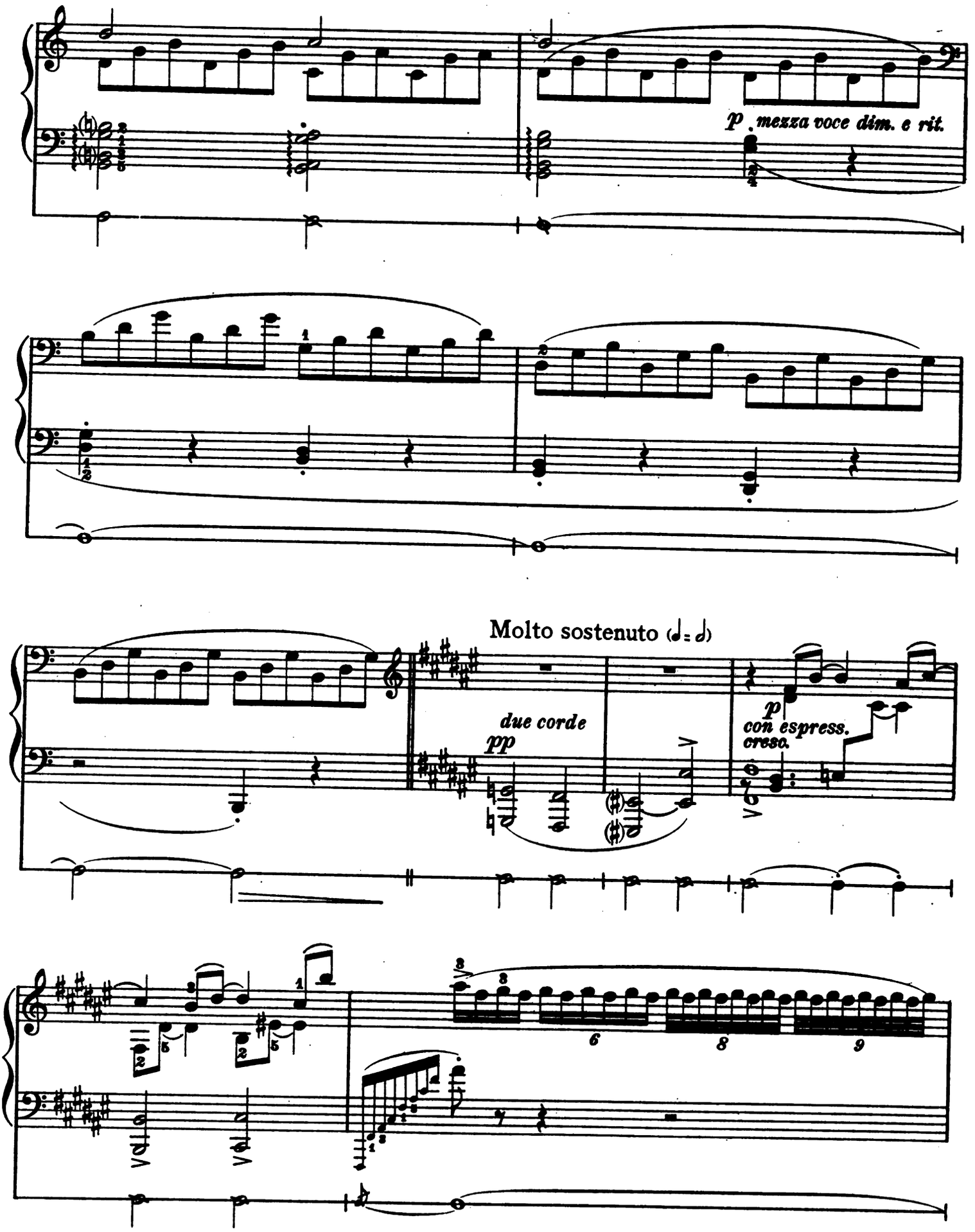

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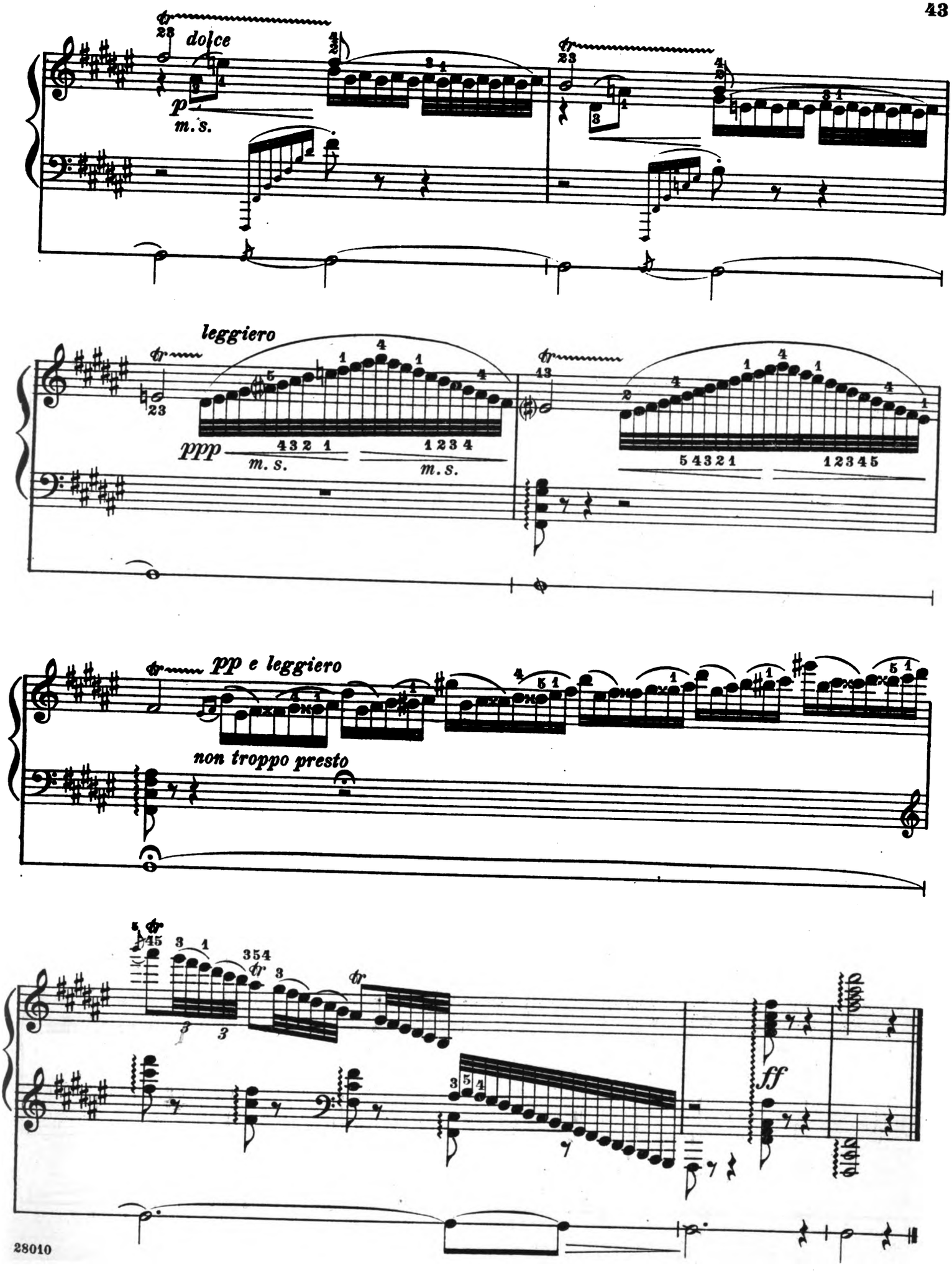

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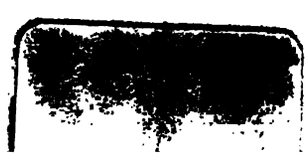

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